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A Study of the Qualities of Effective Mentor Teachers

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A STUDY OF THE QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE MENTOR TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to identify the attributes of teachers who are master teachers and exemplary mentors. This qualitative inquiry was designed to shed light on the values, attributes, beliefs and practices of these individuals as they relate to the art of teaching and mentoring novice teachers. A stable faculty provides schools with a strong support structure that enables students to achieve high levels of instruction and new teachers the high quality of mentoring needed during the first phase of their careers. Recruiting new teachers to fill the void of teachers who have left exacts a financial burden and an educational one. Teachers who leave take with them the rich experiences that students need from an educator; the knowledge of the curriculum, the skills to impart knowledge to young people and the establishment of those positive, sometimes lasting relationships that occur between teachers and students, teachers and parents, and within the teaching community.

Principals and supervisors in one suburban public school district in New Jersey were asked to nominate exemplary veteran teachers, those dedicated professionals who are *beyond good*. To aid the administrators in their selection of the teachers, a letter of solicitation illustrated research-based attributes of exemplary mentor teachers. All subjects were veteran teachers with a minimum of ten years teaching experience. The teachers' experience ranged from 10 to 33 years.

The ten subjects were interviewed by the researcher and each were asked a series of questions related to five research questions regarding the qualities that they

perceive themselves as having as teachers and the strategies that they use to mentor novice teachers.

Findings were congruent with the literature. The exemplary mentor teachers in this study were found to be positive, happy people who consider teaching a vocation. They love their students and the act of teaching. They are life-long learners and reflective practitioners. They recognize the importance of caring, trust, listening and patience when mentoring novice teachers.

Future studies should include data from novice teachers, administrators and urban school educators.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Don, my children Donald, Andrew and Clare, and to my mother Virginia.

Don's love and care for me have been my rock for 32 years. He has always believed in me more than I believed in myself. I could never have gotten through this without him. Thank you with all my heart.

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I have been blessed with a large and loving family. Each of them has brought special gifts to my life and I could not have gotten here without their love and support.

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This is the value of a good teacher, who looks at a face and says, there's something behind that and I want to reach that person, I want to influence that person, I want to encourage that person, I want to enrich that person, I want to call out that person who is behind that face, behind that color, behind that language, behind that tradition, behind that culture. I believe you can do it. I know what was done for me.

-Maya Angelou

Students Need Good Teachers

All students, especially those at risk of failure, need a teacher of high quality to assist them in maximizing their personal abilities and to succeed in school. Tucker and Stronge refer to the "transformational powers" of an effective teacher. These teachers possess a passion for the subjects they teach, genuinely care for their students, inspire and challenge (Tucker & Stronge, 2005). Many studies put forward curriculum, class size, district funding, family and community involvement as contributing factors to school improvement and student achievement (Cawelti, 1999) "But the single most influential school-based factor is the teacher" (Stronge & Tucker, 2000, p.48). A study by Stronge & Ward in 2002 reported that students of effective teachers scored significantly higher than expected on the Virginia Standards of Learning state assessment in English and mathematics (Stronge & Hindman, 2003). The quality of teachers has an enormous impact on student learning and achievement.

Experienced Teachers Are More Effective

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of2002 has put the national spotlight on teacher quality, requiring that every class be taught by a "highly qualified teacher". Concern for teacher quality is growing as numerous studies point to the critical connection between the classroom teacher and student learning. Teachers' professional knowledge and experience make a significant difference in student learning. Enthusiasm, flexibility, perseverance, concern for children and many specific teaching practices make a difference for learning (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003).

NCLB is legislation that is committed to ensuring that all students meet high academic standards in every school. To achieve that goal, school districts across the country will need to provide students with experienced teachers as well as support, and develop new teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002b). Veteran teachers are more effective teachers and help create a positive, supportive school atmosphere for new teachers. Schools with high rates of teacher attrition cannot develop a sturdy nucleus of committed faculty to teach their students to high standards or mentor new teachers to high quality.

In her book, *10 Traits of Highly Effective Teachers*, Elaine K. McEwan identifies six points in teachers' careers as they travel through a continuum in their educational practice:

1. Developing survival skills
2. Becoming competent in the basic skills of instruction
3. Expanding instructional flexibility

4. Acquiring instructional expertise
5. Contributing to the growth of colleagues' instructional expertise
6. Participating in a broad level of educational decisions at all levels of the educational system (McEwan, 2001).

Ideally, one would want all students to be taught by the teacher who has achieved the highest rank on this continuum. For this reason, it is imperative that new teachers remain in their chosen profession to develop the skills needed to engage students in valuable learning experiences. Experienced teachers are not only needed to teach their students but are also a critical element in the training of novice teachers.

Federal and state governments are working hard to ensure that all children have equal access to high quality education. This attention to equal access to quality schools has been expanded to include efforts to improve teacher quality. The logical next step is to ensure that we design programs to improve the quality of new teachers upon their arrival into the profession.

Poor teacher quality critically and negatively impacts student achievement. Teachers who leave take with them the knowledge of content and skills of instruction that come with experience. Therefore, high teacher attrition negatively impacts student achievement. Current research holds that it takes a new teacher three to seven years to develop the skills needed to be an effective teacher (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002a).

New Teachers Are Leaving the Profession

Teachers are leaving the profession at an astronomical rate. Findings by education researcher Richard Ingersoll show that 14% of new teachers leave in their first year of teaching; within three years 33% will leave; and within five years, 40-50% of all new teachers will have left the profession (Ingersoll, 2003). Ingersoll also found that this "revolving door" varies according to a teacher's field of concentration. Math, science, and elementary special education teachers have a higher turnover rate, while the rate is lower for those who teach social studies and English. High poverty public schools have much greater turnover rates than do more affluent public schools. Almost half of all teachers leaving education report either job dissatisfaction (25%) or the desire to pursue a better job (25%) as their reason for leaving. In a further analysis of those who left due to job dissatisfaction, Ingersoll (2003) reports their leaving as linked to poor salary (61%), poor administrative support (32%), student discipline problems (24%), lack of faculty influence and autonomy (15%), poor student motivation (18%), no opportunity for professional advancement (5%), inadequate time to prepare (6%), intrusion on teaching time (11%) and large class sizes (11%).

Policymakers at the state and district level have instituted a wide range of initiatives to recruit new teachers. A much larger challenge than recruiting new teachers is the retaining of existing teachers. The annual exit of teachers from the field has surpassed the annual supply since the early 1990s. A study of the sources of teacher supply reports that 232,000 teachers were hired in 1999 and 287,000 teachers left the

profession. In 1994-1995 more than half left to take other jobs because they were dissatisfied with teaching. The large percentage of novice teachers who left were dissatisfied with working conditions or had insufficient preparation for the realities of classroom instruction (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). The problem is not a lack of new teachers entering the field but what Ingersoll (2003) labels as the problem of the "leaky bucket". New teachers, like water, are being poured into the system or bucket, but they are leaking out for a variety of reasons.

The Southern Regional Education Board has reported that while 1% of teachers claim low salary as their reason for leaving education, a larger number, 20 %, cite lack of support in their school, such as mentoring by experienced teachers, as their fundamental reason for leaving (Southern Regional Education Board, 2002).

Teachers leaving after their first year are often among the best and the brightest. Several studies have shown a significant correlation between teachers who leave and high achievement on exams such as the SAT (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).

The High Cost of Attrition

The high rate of teacher turnover puts an economic and staffing strain on staff development resources. Improving teacher retention rates would cut down on the cost of staff development programs geared to new teachers, freeing these resources to be better spent on improving the quality of veteran teachers' instructional practices and knowledge base of research and practice related to the field.

Data from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2003) estimate that a school district incurs $12,500 in costs every time a teachers leaves. Carrol (2004) and Wong (2003) put the costs of teacher attrition at $13,000 to $50,000

per teacher when accounting for losses in teacher quality and student achievement (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002a).

The turnover, sometimes referred to as the "churn of novice teachers", reduces overall education productivity since teacher effectiveness improves after the first few years of teaching (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Beginning teachers who leave before becoming high-quality veterans take with them the money spent on staff development and leave school districts faced with the expense of doing it all over again. Finding ways to retain new teachers would save the nation's taxpayers billions of dollars. A stable faculty provides schools with a strong support structure that enables students to achieve high levels of instruction and new teachers the high quality of mentoring needed during the first phase of their careers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002b).

High Quality Mentoring Raises Retention Rates

Life for new teachers has traditionally been a "sink or swim" proposition (Ingersoll, 2003). Historically, schools have not been set up to support the learning of novice teachers (Sarason, 1990). Little (1999) observes many schools as "individual classrooms, connected by a common parking lot" (p. 256). A Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 2000-2001 shows that mentoring does make a difference. In the survey, the rate of attrition among teachers who had been in a mentoring program was 11.8% while the rate of attrition for those who had not been in a mentoring program was 18.6%.

Beginning teachers have expressed concerns related to curriculum development, time management, and classroom management that were not addressed in their preservice programs. Mentor teachers play an important role in giving new teachers the skills and

role models they need to survive and thrive in a profession that demands quality instruction from the novice. Promoting the personal and professional growth and well being of new teachers greatly improves the likelihood that they will remain in the teaching profession (Stansbury & Zimmerman, 2001).

Meaningful collaboration between mentors and novice teachers does not happen by chance; it needs to be structured and planned. The mentor/mentee relationship should move from a hierarchical relationship to one of mutual trust, respect and support. The energies and abilities of the experienced and novice teachers together contribute to improved learning for teachers and students (Udelhofen & Larson, 2003). The development of a high quality teacher should not be a singular process that the novice teacher ventures into alone. Having a veteran teacher dedicated to the induction of a new teacher promotes the engagement of meaningful conversations about teaching, learning, and students. The beginning teacher's identity emerges over time as the mentor and mentee identify challenges and work through solutions in a safe environment. Professional growth leads to better teaching and, ultimately, to improved student achievement (McEwan, 2001).

Novice teachers enter the profession with bright hopes and dreams, but from the very first day in a classroom that is solely their own, they are faced with many challenges and responsibilities. They have spent their undergraduate years studying educational methodology and usually have had the opportunity to student teach in a classroom where they always had a cooperating teacher at hand on whom they could rely. Teaching is unique in that novice teachers are put into classrooms and have the same duties, responsibilities and expectations as the professional with many years of experience.

Teaching is a highly interpersonal task in that the teacher spends the day in a classroom with 20 to 30 students for whom he or she is responsible. But, it is also very isolating to be the only adult in a classroom without anyone with whom they might collaborate or consult. Moir (2003) points out that novice teachers find themselves with two tasks that must be mastered at the same time: "being a teacher and learning to teach".

Many will not survive the initial few years of teaching. Their flight from the field takes an enormous toll on the educational system. Recruiting new teachers to fill the void of teachers who have left exacts a financial burden and an educational one. Teachers who leave take with them the rich experiences that students need from an educator; the knowledge of the curriculum, the skills to impart knowledge to young people and the establishment of those positive, sometimes lasting relationships that occur between teachers and students, teachers and parents, and within the teaching community (Moir, 2003).

As more districts and states are adopting mentor programs for new teachers, some impressive results in teacher retention are being reported. In Rochester, New York, the new teacher mentor program, known as the *Career in Teaching Plan* increased the number of first-year teachers who returned for a second year from 69% in 1987 to 86% in 1999 (Heller, 2004). Lafourche Parish, in Louisiana, found its teacher attrition rate decreased from 51% to 15% after it introduced a new teacher training program in 1996. By 2002, the rate had dropped to 7% (Wong, 2002). The programs vary in design, but all include mentors for new teachers.

New teacher mentoring programs, also known as induction programs, help

transition beginning teachers into the classroom and acculturate them to the specific school and district in which they will work. California's Santa Cruz New Teacher Project began in 1988 to provide new teachers with an induction program to support them during their first years of service. Mentors from among the teaching staff work with new teachers both one-on-one weekly and in small groups monthly. Mentors are chosen through a rigorous selection process and are then trained in the development of skills needed to support new teachers (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002b).

In the 2003-2004 school year, 15 states required and funded mentor programs for incoming teachers. Connecticut's mentor program, known as Beginning Educator Support and Training (BEST), requires that mentor teachers be selected by a committee of teachers and administrators and then must be trained in Connecticut's teaching standards, the portfolio assessment process and coaching strategies. Regular meetings are required to take place between mentor and mentee and release time is given to teachers to observe in one another's classrooms. Beginning teachers must demonstrate proficiency in essential teaching skills and are assessed through a portfolio submitted in their second year of teaching. Portfolios are assessed by their content, which includes demonstrations of planning, assessment of student learning and reflection on teaching and learning. Mentors receive stipends or a reduction of teaching load at the discretion of each district (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2002b).

Qualities of the Mentor

Pre-service training and student teaching are important steps in the development of a good teacher, but they are not sufficient. Mentors have a tremendous impact on new teachers (Moir, 2003) within the setting of their first assignment. The mentor is needed

to address the concerns of the new teacher and is able to give practical and concrete advice, promote reflective practice, demonstrate effective instruction, observe and provide immediate feedback, and offer perspective to an overwhelmed novice. Mentors provide a smooth transition from pre-service training to actual professional employment. Ideally, mentors should have the same field of experience and grade level assignment as their mentee (Heller, 2004). Mentors and mentees need time to observe in each other's classroom and to discuss professional issues every week. A reduced teaching load is recommended for the mentor to be available to the protege. Mentors should be compensated for the additional time needed and the responsibility of mentoring.

In their guide to mentoring, Lipton and Wellman (2003) relate research and current practice clearly indicating that mentoring is a critical component in the induction of new teachers into the field as well as supporting continual improvement and practice. They identify four assumptions about mentoring:

1. Induction is an investment in retention, integration and continual growth.
   "The way in which an organization or school initiates its new members is an important aspect of its culture." (p. x) Mentoring establishes a climate of collaboration and on-going learning.
2. Emotional safety is necessary to produce cognitive complexity.
   Mentors can accelerate the progress of a novice teacher by building a safe and supportive relationship that balances support and challenge by encouraging questions, concerns and information sharing.
3. Mentoring relationships offer opportunity for reciprocal growth and learning.

The learning taking place is reciprocal, adding renewal for veteran teachers and increased confidence for novices.

4. The central goal for mentoring programs is improved student learning. Examination of the connections between instructional practice and student achievement is ongoing in today's high-stakes assessment environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the attributes of teachers who are master teachers and exemplary mentors. This qualitative inquiry is designed to shed light on the values, attributes, beliefs and practices of these individuals as they relate to the art of teaching and mentoring novice teachers.

This study first asked administrators in a Somerset County New Jersey, public school district to nominate exemplary teacher/mentors with ten or more years of experience. To enhance their ability to make this identification, the researcher offered descriptors of exemplary teacher/mentors in the four skill areas described by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (Fall, 1999) in its publication, *Creating a Teacher Mentoring Program.* The categories are:

1. Attitude and Character: Teachers who:

   Have the desire to be a role model for other teachers

   Exhibit strong commitment to the teaching profession

   Believe mentoring improves instructional practice

   Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning

   Are reflective and able to learn from mistakes

2. Professional Competence and Experience: Teachers who:

Are regarded by colleagues as outstanding teachers

Posses excellent knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter

Demonstrate excellent classroom management skills

Feel comfortable being observed by other teachers

Understand the policies and procedures of the school and district

3. Communication Skills: Teachers who:

Articulate effective instructional strategies

Listen attentively

Ask questions that prompt reflection and understanding

Offer critiques in positive and productive ways

Convey enthusiasm and passion for teaching

4. Interpersonal Skills: Teachers who:

Maintain trusting professional relationships

Have the ability to care for a protege's emotional and professional needs

Are attentive to sensitive political issues

Are approachable and demonstrate good rapport with others

Are patient

Once identified, these teachers were asked to participate in an in-depth interview, the goal of which is to further determine the practices and beliefs that make one an effective mentor. This study will serve to enlighten educational administrators and policymakers about the qualities needed to effectively train and retain new teachers. It will include teachers working in elementary schools, middle school and a high school in a Somerset County New Jersey, public school district. This school district was chosen

because it has a comprehensive mentoring program that includes training of mentors and novice teachers. In this growing school district, the average number of new teachers hired each year has been approximately 45. The district's Professional Development Committee carefully selects mentors. The design of the district's mentoring program is in accordance with the New Jersey Professional Standards for Teachers. This study seeks to focus on the qualities of the mentor within a comprehensive mentoring program and not the mentoring program itself. To allow for rich, in-depth interviews, the number of participants in this qualitative study was not to exceed ten.

Research Questions

The design of this study will use qualitative methods to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attributes of exemplary mentor teachers?
2. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about effective instruction?
3. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about and expectations of students?
4. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about how best to mentor novice teachers and what they need to know in order to succeed?
5. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about the educational system?

Limitations of the Study

The design of this study is limited to the perceptions of ten public school teachers, each of whom were identified as an "exemplary mentor teacher" by their principal or supervisor. The size of the group and focused geographic representations are acknowledged limitations in the study. An additional limitation of the study involves

reliable identification of exemplary teachers due to the subjective nature of the task. It is assumed that competent administrators can identify those teachers on their staff who are significantly a cut above the rest (Williams, 2003). The principals nominating the exemplary teacher were asked to relate other forms of teacher recognition, including "Teacher of the Year", National Board Certification, and other awards for outstanding teaching.

This project will differ in both design and focus from other studies related to the complex issues of teacher attrition and retention. In contrast to quantitative studies on why teachers leave the classroom, this qualitative inquiry of long-tenured, exemplary teachers is designed to support recommendations about policies and practices that could confirm the attributes of exemplary mentors to ensure that practitioners of this caliber be selected as mentors to novice teachers.

There are 39 elementary schools and several thousand elementary school teachers in Somerset County; this study will be limited to one school district and by the sample size (N=10). Data was collected from the subjects using in-depth, confidential interviews. This qualitative design allows the researcher to gain a deeper and more accurate understanding of the sample population. The New Jersey Department of Education ranks school districts by their socioeconomic status (SES). Schools are assigned to a District Factor Group (DFG) with the thought that there is a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and educational outcomes (New Jersey State Department of Education). The exemplary mentor teachers being studied are all from one school district in Somerset County with a DFG designation of J, the highest socio-

economic group. These limitations indicate that the findings may not be reflective of teachers in other District Factor Groups or teachers in non-public schools.

Definition of Terms

1. Mentor: An experienced, highly successful, veteran educator, skilled at providing instructional support, and committed to the role of coaching a new teacher (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004).
2. Effective teacher: The effective teacher possesses knowledge of content, of pedagogy, of context, of students, and of the teaching-and-learning process (Stronge, 2002).
3. Novice Teacher: An educator in the first year of professional teaching.
4. Teaching Level: The grade level taught by a teacher. Elementary teaching level includes kindergarten through grade five and secondary level includes grades six through twelve.

Assumptions

There are several underlying assumptions basic to this study:

1. Principals who nominate an exemplary teacher/mentor will do so honestly, giving their perceptions of the individual with accuracy and fairness. Williams (2003) found that competent administrators can identify those teachers on their staff who are significantly a cut above the rest. Principals and content area supervisors by the nature of their jobs supervise and evaluate teachers and have the ability to compare and rank teacher effectiveness. Williams (2003) states, "Administrators, more than parents or colleagues, have the opportunity to see many teachers in

action in the classroom. They are also in a position to know when things are not going well in classes" (p.63).

2. Exemplary teacher/mentors have perceptions of their own personal behaviors and will self-reflect honestly and candidly.
3. The traits of exemplary teacher/mentors can be categorized and described. Attributes can be grouped in a way that makes sense.

This study is organized in five chapters. The first chapter introduces the problem to be studied and offers a historical perspective. Included in this chapter is a rationale for the study with attention to the effectiveness of experienced teachers, information about attrition and retention of new teachers, research supporting high quality mentoring, the purpose of the study, research questions, limitations of the study, definitions of terms and some basic assumptions.

Chapter II provides a more thorough review of the literature. It looks at the attributes of exemplary mentor teachers as found in research and case studies. In an effort to remain objective, it also reveals some of the negative views of the effects of mentors.

Chapter III describes the sample, the interview questions, the method of data collection, and the data analysis employed in the study.

Chapter IV provides the findings, as well as an analysis of the data.

Chapter V summarizes the study and details the conclusions formed, based on the in-depth analysis of the data. Discussion of the results and implications for further research concludes the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will focus on research reports that call for improving the quality of education by focusing on the attributes of effective teachers, concerns about negative effects of teacher turnover, and concepts of mentoring.

Improving the Quality of Education

Writing for the Journal of Staff Development, Hirsch, Koppich and Knapp (2000) connect school reform with teacher quality in their article, *Reflections on Teacher Quality*. They believe that the nation is in what might be called a "third wave" of the educational reform movement initiated in the early 1980's. First-wave reform called for higher and more rigorous academic standards for students that centered on standards and curricula. Second-wave reforms identified issues of the structural aspects of education and included raising teachers' salaries and giving them decision-making authority. The third -wave reforms focused on policies to improve the quality of teaching. These reforms address teacher preparation, certification, professional development and professional standards. "Central to these reforms is the recognition that capable teachers are the most critical link to higher achieving students" (p. 9).

The 1996 report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future,* strengthened the current focus on

improving the quality of teaching. The report states, "What teachers know and can do makes the crucial difference in what children learn" (p.12).

In an interview conducted by Dennis Sparks, executive director of the National Staff Development Council, Terry Dozier, former advisor to the U.S. Department of Education, quotes an unnamed colleague on the topic of educational reform, "States have spent millions of dollars building the car without ever making sure we had someone to drive it" (p. 30). Dozier contends, "...it is the quality of teaching that is important. For a long time, people focused on raising standards and writing assessments, all the while forgetting about the critical element of the teacher and what transpires between a teacher and a child"(p.30). Dozier speaks to the importance of supporting beginning teachers in the first few "critical years" abandoning the former "sink or swim" approach to induction. In addressing mentoring, Dozier recalls her early experience as a teacher, "I worked with a group of teachers who shared the same students. We shared a common planning period and an office. As a first year teacher, I was mentored by the experienced teachers on my team without anyone realizing it. At the same time, I helped them acquire new ideas and strategies. We planned and problem solved together. Putting us together in that way was a structural solution to the problem of isolation" (Sparks, p.31).

Studies About Effective Teachers

Stronge (2002) summarizes several research reports on teacher effectiveness. He reviews McBer's research on the attributes of effective teaching describes three key elements of a teacher's unique contributions to the foundation of learning: (1) teaching skills, (2) professional characteristics, and (3) classroom climate. A high level of

professionalism, thinking skills, planning, expectations, leading, and relating to others were the observed characteristics of teacher effectiveness in this study.

Stronge includes researcher Bob Munro's study of teacher effectiveness, which determined that students placed with high performing teachers had increased achievement over students placed with low performing teachers and these positive and negative effects were evident for three years (Stronge, 2002).

In a study involving 5,381 students at 382 public schools and 28 Catholic schools, Rowan found that highly talented and motivated teachers have the greatest effect on student achievement. Talent was defined as a teacher's knowledge of content, training in their field, and the use of effective instructional strategies. Motivated teachers had high expectations of themselves and their students (Stronge, 2002).

Teacher Turnover

Replacing teachers is costly. A recent study in Texas used several models to approximate the cost of teacher turnover. The study found that the turnover rate was 15.5 %, which included the fact that 40% of new teachers were quitting in the first three years at a cost to taxpayers ranging from $329 million to $2.1 billion dollars a year (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). In this model, the larger number includes the costs of hiring, training, and learning curve loss. This is money that can be put to better use. School districts facing limits on spending, along with the escalating costs associated with increased enrollment must find ways to reduce the burden that school budgets impose on taxpayers. Using the calculations of the U.S. Department of Labor, the Alliance for Education estimates that the nationwide cost of teacher attrition is more than $2.6 billion annually. Many other researchers believe that this is a conservative estimate because it

does not take into account loss in teacher quality and student achievement. The National Commission of Teaching and America's Future emphasized the importance of mentoring new teachers in 1996. To make schools genuine learning organizations for both students and teachers, the Commission called for initiatives to restructure time and staffing so that new teachers would have regular opportunities to work with experienced teachers having shared responsibilities for groups of students (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

There is a growing concern about the high attrition rates of teachers in their first three to five years (Evertson & Smithey, 2001). Beginning teachers, even those who have been well prepared, need ongoing support and mentoring. The need for such support is critical in light of the fact that an estimated 30%-50% of new teachers leave the profession within five years. They leave for many reasons, but one of the most common is lack of administrative support. Induction and mentoring programs help fill this gap (Hirsch, et al, 2000).

Concepts of Mentoring

In *Teaching and Mentoring: A Critical Review*, Feiman-Nemser (1999) writes, "...assigning mentors to work with beginning teachers represents an improvement over the abrupt and unassigned entry into teaching that characterizes the experiences of many novices" (p. 2). She points out that mentoring must be linked to a vision of good teaching, an understanding of teacher learning and supported by a culture that favors collaboration and inquiry.

Mentoring support for new teachers has become part of a broad movement aimed at improving education (Evertson & Smithey, 2001).

Mentor program coordinator, Barry Sweeney (1994) suggests that schools identify their "purpose for mentoring". Included in these purposes are:

(a) To speed up the learning of the new teachers and reduce the stress of transition

(b) To improve instructional performance through modeling by a "top performer"

(c) To attract new staff in a very competitive recruiting environment

(d) To retain excellent veteran staff in a setting where their contributions are valued

(e) To respond to state, district, or contractual mandates

(f) To promote the socialization of new staff into the school "family", values & traditions

To alter the culture and the norms of the school by creating a collaborative subculture Sweeney advises mentor coordinators to identify their purposes and design activities and events for each goal.

In *The Good Mentor*, James Rowley (1999) identifies six essential qualities of the good mentor and the implications the qualities have for entry-year programs design and mentor teacher training:

1. The good mentor is committed to the role of mentoring. Showing up and staying on the job is natural to the good mentor who makes a positive impact on the novice teacher. This practitioner knows that the task can be a challenging endeavor requiring significant investments of time and energy.
2. The good mentor is accepting of the beginning teacher. Rowley cites Carl Rogers in describing the importance of empathy in the mentoring relationship. A good mentor accepts another person without making judgments, and training can raise

levels of consciousness about this trait, reminding veterans to revisit their own first years of teaching acknowledging the growth that has taken place.

3. The good mentor is skilled at providing instructional support. Beginning teachers enter the profession with varying levels of skills in instructional design and delivery. Good mentors coach their proteges by observing one another in the classroom. Rowley emphasizes the importance of classroom observations by likening it to coaching a tennis serve or a golf swing. An athletic coach would never help a rookie with a serve or a swing without seeing the athlete play.
4. The good mentor is effective in interpersonal contexts. Just as good teachers adjust their teaching behaviors and communications to meet the needs of individual students, good mentors adjust their mentoring communications to meet the individual needs of the mentee. To make such adjustments, one needs to be aware of one's communication style and objectively observe the behavior of the mentee. Rowley recommends *The Supervisory Beliefs Inventory* (Glickman, 1990) and *The Leadership Adaptability and Style Inventory* (Hersey & Blanchard, 1974) as instruments for mentors to reflect on their interpersonal and communication skills. In addition, Rowley suggests his own program, a series of analyzed mentor and mentee conversation on videotape - *Mentoring the New Teacher* (Rowley & Hart, 1993).
5. The good mentor is a model of a continuous learner. Mentors model this commitment by demonstrating their openness to learn from veteran and novice colleagues and their willingness to pursue professional growth through workshops, graduate courses, professional journals and experimentation.

6. The good mentor communicates hope and enthusiasm. A crucial characteristic of mentors is their ability to communicate their belief that a person is capable of transcending present challenges and of accomplishing great things in the future.

In her report entitled *Informal, Available, Patient,* Susan D. Whitaker (2000) relates the perceptions of novice teachers whose experience provides lessons for planning and implementing teacher mentor programs. Among the findings, beginning teachers value weekly, informal meetings with mentors who teach similar content to similar students. Whitaker (2000) surveyed 200 beginning special education teachers and found six lessons to be considered when planning and implementing mentor programs:

Activities: "Beginning teachers perceived informal, unscheduled meetings as both the most frequent and most effective" (Whitaker, 2000, p.23). Scheduled meetings were not considered as effective and telephone and written contacts were perceived to be the least effective. Beginning teachers noted infrequent observations by their mentors, but found them to be useful. "To be effective, the mentor had to have at least weekly contact with the beginning teacher" (Whitaker, 2000, p. 23).

Content: The content of the mentoring most often focused on emotional support for the novice teachers. Second to that, "assistance with the mechanics of teaching, such as learning policies and procedures, locating materials and resources, and getting to know staff" (Whitaker, 2000, p.23) were the content items reported in the survey. Surprisingly, beginning teachers perceived assistance with issues that directly impacted on student learning, such as assessment, curriculum, instruction, lesson planning, or discipline as infrequent and relatively ineffective.

Characteristics: Beginning teachers rated the mentor's "specialized knowledge of both policy/ procedures and specialized pedagogy" (Whitaker, 2000, p.23) as most important. Second to that in importance to beginning teachers were the personal qualities of their mentors related to: being approachable and available, good communication skills, trustworthiness, patience, sensitivity, confidence and enthusiasm. Beginning teachers rated the general professional knowledge of the mentor as slightly less important than the personal qualities noted.

The Match: Novice teachers felt the most effective relationships were with mentors who taught the same content area, had similar age students, similar teaching styles and common planning periods. "They did not perceive being of the same gender as important, nor did same gender pairing result in significant difference in the perceived effectiveness of the mentoring" (Whitaker, 2000, p.23).

Effects: "Mentoring relationships perceived as effective, improved job satisfaction and resulted in significant increase in the likelihood of the teacher remaining in the teaching profession, although the effect size was small (significant at the .05 level of confidence)" (Whitaker, 2000, p.23).

Whitaker concludes, "While assistance from an experienced teacher can be mandated, developing truly effective mentoring relationships depends on the match between the teachers, their willingness and desire to participate in the relationship, and the frequency and quality of the contacts between them" (Whitaker, 2000, p.23).

Roles of the Mentor

Sweeney (2001) recommends that the role of the mentor be well defined in terms of functions, including "support and challenge". Verbs such as "observe, coach, or plan" should be used to describe mentor activities. He also advises that mentors cannot "do it all". Mentoring should be part of a complete induction program that includes orientation, mentoring, visitations, and staff development. According to Sweeney, mentors should help proteges build strong links with, and remain open to learning from other master teachers besides the mentor. Mentors should be capable of diagnosing the protege's needs.

In *The Mettle of a Mentor* published in the Journal of Staff Development. Denmark and Podsen (2000) outline and describe seven competencies that a mentor teacher should possess including:

> Competency one: Understand the mentoring role. Mentors must understand and be committed to gaining the skills required of the role. Mentor and protege must be given time to plan, observe one another, provide feedback and team-teach.
>
> Competency two: Initiate the relationship. Mentors should be the ones to take the first step in creating this collaborative, learning relationship. Once the new teacher has reviewed basic information about the school community, the mentor and novice should meet to discuss goals and objectives related to the novice teacher's performance and the mentoring relationship.
>
> Competency three: Establish a climate of support. Mentors help novice teachers learn what is expected of them and share with them learning materials that can

help to reduce the workload and the stress allowing first-year teachers to prioritize their schedules to focus more time on teaching.

Competency four: Model reflective teaching practices. One of the most effective ways for a mentor to help a novice teacher develop his or her teaching style is to demonstrate a reflective approach to teaching, self-evaluation, and implementation of new ideas.

Competency five: Apply and share effective classroom management strategies. The mentor should acknowledge the difficulty of classroom management with the novice and offer his/her own personal strategies for successful classroom management, while also encouraging the beginning teacher to adapt them to fit his/her own needs. Checklists are helpful tools that establish classroom standards and can also be used as a reflective aid.

Competency six: Encourage and nurture an appreciation of diversity. Mentors can help novices and themselves by sharing in the effort to examine their personal beliefs and biases concerning diversity issues. Both formal assessment tools and informal conversations can help the mentor and mentee to evaluate and articulate their subconscious assumptions about others.

> "For example, they may consider whether they believe that intellectually gifted students are self- motivated and self disciplined; whether female students are easier to teach than male students; or whether their teaching practices reflect a belief that at-risk learners are slow learners and unmotivated to improve their skills" (Denmark and Podsen, 2000, p. 22).

Competency seven: Embrace mentoring as an investment in professional development. Mentors need an attitude of being lifelong learners and must understand that mentoring is an opportunity to develop leadership skills in themselves and in those they mentor (Denmark & Podsen, 2000).

The mentoring relationship is more than a veteran teacher acting as a "buddy" to a new colleague. It is a professional, collaborative pairing that should involve specific goals and objectives related to the mentoring relationship and the novice teacher's performance.

Selection of Mentors

On the topic of selection of mentors, Sweeney (1994) advises that mentors should be the best models of excellent instructional practice noting that many other experienced staff should be rejected if "not good enough". Mentors may experience a high degree of stress as they are often called upon to evaluate the protege. The technical and interpersonal skills of a mentor are highly valued. The mentor should model professional growth, have a clear focus on improving student learning as well as support the protege's professional growth. An effective mentor is skilled in the development of critical thinking. When selecting mentors, administrators should consider all of these characteristics. Sweeney reminds mentoring coordinators that good teachers of children do not necessarily make good mentors.

Mentor Training

In an experimental field study, *Mentoring Effects on Protéges' Classroom Practice*, Evertson & Smithey (2001) found that protéges of trained mentors showed increased evidence of developing and sustaining more workable classroom routines, managed instruction more smoothly, and gained student cooperation in academic tasks more effectively than proteges of those mentors who had not undergone training. In the study, a treatment group of mentors was trained over four days. These prepared mentors were engaged in guided inquiry activities related to the nature of the mentoring role, the needs of beginning teachers, and the mentoring process. The control group in the study did not attend the workshop. The content model for the workshop covered five areas:

1. Mentoring and the Mentoring Role
2. Assisting the Beginning Teacher
3. Helping Beginning Teachers with Critical Tasks of Teaching
4. The Process of Mentoring
5. Developing Action Plans

"The study provides some evidence that helping mentors systematically focus on practices important for new teacher growth and survival (i.e., management and planning skills, problem solving) enables them to support their protéges' teaching practices early in the school year" (Evertson & Smithey, 2001, p. 303). The authors point out that "the presence of a mentor alone is not enough; the mentor's knowledge and skills of how to mentor are also crucial" (Evertson & Smithey, 2001, p.303). Evertson & Smithey (2001) also observed that trained mentors demonstrated superior conference skills, including

more awareness of the novice teacher's need to analyze their own teaching before being offered solutions.

Rowley (1999) strongly expressed the importance of mentor training with the belief that veteran teachers unwilling to participate in a quality training program indicates a lack of commitment and dedication to the role of mentor.

In *A New Teacher Mentoring Knowledge Base of Best Practices: A Summary Learned From Practitioners (Sweeney, 1994),* mentor program coordinator, Barry Sweeney states that mentoring is the central feature of the induction process. He suggests that school districts build a "pool" of trained mentors.

Studies are needed to help administrators in identifying the right player for the mentor role. The rewards of selecting the appropriate, knowledgeable and positive experienced teacher will be a reduction of novice teacher turnover and the creation of a more valuable corps of teachers who are confident and successful in their teaching assignments.

Adult Learning Theory

Evertson & Smithey (2001) suggest that mentors should possess an understanding of the research on adult learning, reflection and the appropriate practices related to student learning in the classroom. Fawcett (1997) writes of adults as needing to be self-directed learners. He explains that they are problem-centered rather than subject-centered and the intuitive mentor should remember that an entry-level teacher is not at the same stage in their career as the veteran. They are as Moir (2003) calls it, at the "survival stage" in their first few months. "The fact that entry year teachers are not concerned with higher level issues of education does not make them any less intellectual or competent"

(Moir, 2003). Adult learning is linked to what they need to know or do in order to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Evertson & Smithey (2001) commend trained mentors for suggesting specific strategies to mentees. In contrast, Fawcett (1997) cautions mentor teachers to resist the urge to try to fix the problems of their mentees, but rather to first ask for their opinion when an entry level teacher seeks advice, thus encouraging them to generate a list of possible solutions to problems that arise in that first year.

In identifying some basic assumptions about mentoring, Sweeney (1994) states, "Without mentoring, new staff focus on survival" (p.1). He reminds those conducting mentor programs, "There are many skills needed to work with adults which are not learned in classrooms." (p. 4)

Attrition

Concerned about the rate of attrition during the first three years of teaching and aware of the problems faced by beginning teachers, policymakers saw the logic of on-site support and assistance to novices during their first year of teaching (Little, 1999). The level of mentoring has increased rapidly, mandating some form of mentored support for beginning teachers. The U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics projects that the number of newly hired public school teachers needed by 2008-2009 ranges from 1.7 million to 2.7 million. Mentoring new teachers will remain an on-going process in all school districts.

Need for Studies on Mentoring

Feiman-Nemser (1999) calls for the need for more direct studies of mentoring and its affects on teaching and teacher retention to inform mentoring policy and practice. She points out a need to learn more about how mentors work with beginning teachers in

productive ways, the structures and resources that support that work, and how mentoring fits into broader frameworks of professional development and accountability.

Evertson and Smithey (2001) conclude their study of mentors and proteges by suggesting the need for exploring how the training of mentors leads to more successful beginnings for novice teachers.

The National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005), in its report, *Qualified Teachers for At Risk Students*, identifies the need for evaluative research related to the quality of teachers in our nation's schools. Identifying and examining the traits of exemplary teachers and carefully listening to them relate their pedagogy, strategies and understanding about learning will contribute to our goal of training new teachers to maximize academic achievement for all students, including those at great risk of failure.

Evidence of the growing concern for teacher quality can be seen by the number of initiatives that are underway in new teacher development, including the Carnegie Corporation's funding of the Teachers for a New Era initiative in New York City. Bank Street College was one of the universities awarded a five-year grant to prepare more effective and accountable teachers.

The No Child Left Behind Act includes strategies to recruit new teachers through alternative routes in a program known as Transition to Teaching. These recent college graduates and mid-career professionals will have had no formal training in teaching and will require intensive, high-quality mentoring to obtain certification under state-approved programs that will enable individuals to be eligible to teacher certification within a reduced period of time. The right type of mentoring will be critical if these new teachers

are to succeed and not fall prey to the poor practices of ineffective teacher-mentors (Brewster & Railsback, 2001).

Assist not Assess

A thorny issue among policymakers and educators is the conventional wisdom that mentors assist and not assess their charges. Some state level programs use a team approach in which mentor teachers fulfill the role of support while supervisors or principals evaluate performance for the purposes of employment and certification (Feiman-Nemser, 1999). Halford (1998) clearly states that the primary role of the mentor teacher should be support provider, not formal evaluator. Simply put, "new teachers need someone to talk to" (p.35). The novice needs freedom to stretch developmentally by implementing new lessons, managing student behavior, and teaching content; the mentor needs to encourage this freedom while being available to guide, provide feedback, and be a sounding board for the novice (Denmark & Podsen, 2000).

Doubts About the Effects of Mentoring

Feiman-Nemser (1999) cautions that the enthusiasm for establishing mentor programs has not been matched by clear goals about the purposes of mentoring, nor has support for new teachers been subjected to rigorous empirical scrutiny. She also sees the need for studies that examine useful ways of preparing mentors to work with novices and track the effects of mentoring on classroom practice. Evertson & Smithey (2001) add to this caution stating, "... mentoring may have a conservative effect on new teachers' practice, introducing and helping to support the status quo instead of encouraging new teachers to explore innovative practice" (p. 294).

The direct approach often used in dealing with children does not work well with adult learners. A new teacher must be actively involved in discovering his or her own answers. Fawcett (1997) advises good teachers to consider the characteristics of adult learners and adjust their interaction styles accordingly to be good mentors.

Mentoring–The Benefit to Veteran Teachers

Experienced teachers can find renewal and new teachers can find success through mentoring relationships, providing that the mentoring teacher understands his or her role (Denmark & Podsen, 2000).

Sweeney (1994) writes, "All participants in mentoring gain from the experience" (p. 1). Denmark & Podsen (2000) report that a peer relationship can be beneficial to both the mentor and the novice. According to Glickman (1990), teachers strengthen their skills and professionalism by interacting with each other, by trying new approaches in the classroom, by sharing ideas with peers, and by using peer input to evaluate and revise their teaching strategies.

Summary

This review of literature focuses on topics related to the key actor in the educational forum – the teacher. Literature was reviewed to support the purpose of the study, to identify the attributes of master teachers who are exemplary mentors. These master teachers not only influence the quality of instruction in their own classrooms, but model excellence for novice teachers. In examining these subjects carefully, educational leaders and policymakers can hold these traits as a benchmark for selecting future mentors, a critical factor in supporting and retaining new teachers.

Studies about school reform point to teacher quality as the most important link to greater student achievement. The 1996 report by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* anchors the research on teacher quality identifying highly qualified teachers as those who possess a deep understanding of the subjects they teach and how students learn. Subsequent, separate studies by McBer, Munro and Rowan describe the unique contributions that effective teachers bring to learning. Their research validates the traits that are examined in this study.

A positive consequence of the high rate of teacher attrition has been the increased number of studies on this topic. Teacher turnover has a negative effect on student achievement and is a heavy financial burden on schools districts according to studies by Darling-Hammond & Sykes (2003), the U.S. Department of Labor, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1996) and Evertson & Smithey (2001). Their findings support the need for learning more about how to retain new teachers and a study of the traits of those veteran teachers who should mentor them.

As the literature on the concepts of mentoring is examined, Feiman-Nemser (1999), Sweeney (1994), Rowley (1999), and Whitaker (2000) shed light on the concepts of mentoring. These concepts are important to keep in mind when schools administrators are screening and training mentor volunteers in induction programs. Rowley's essential qualities of what good mentors need to offer their novices are congruent with Whitaker's study of the needs of beginning teachers. Both highlight the importance of a mentor teacher's effective communication, interpersonal skills and emotional support. Whitaker however, diverged from the other researchers in reporting these characteristics as more

important to the novices themselves than issues of assessment, curriculum, instruction, lesson planning, or discipline.

The findings of researchers who studied the role of the mentor are integral to the primary focus of this study, which is an examination of the attributes of exemplary mentor teachers. Denmark & Podsen (2000) present competencies that mentor teachers should possess that align with Whitaker's study of novice teachers.

Further information is needed about which teachers are most effective. States, districts and schools need this information to increase the overall number of effective teachers in classrooms.

A review of the literature finds that teachers are the most critical factor in quality educational practice. They are leaving the profession within the first three to five years in education before they have had the opportunity to achieve a level of excellence. A key element to retaining novice teachers and developing highly effective teachers is supporting them with master teachers who will guide them to the competency required to improve schools. Identifying excellent veteran teachers can be a subjective practice if one is unable to recognize the qualities of the effective mentor teacher. An examination of the recent studies about quality mentors finds that they have similar traits of attitude and character that are positive and reflective in nature. They have excellent interpersonal and communication skills. Moir (2003), Evertson & Smithey (2001), Fawcett (1997) introduce the concept of adult learning theory and a mentor's need to understand the appropriate practices employed with adult learners. This research study will look for congruency between the literature and the subjects in the study who were nominated by their supervisors as exemplary mentor teachers.

The growing concern for teacher quality has brought about the need for studies on mentoring as indicated by Feiman-Nemser (1999), Evertson & Smithey (2001) the National Partnership for Teaching in At-Risk Schools (2005) Brewster and Railback (2001) and NCLB. Evertson & Smithey caution us that the wrong mentors sustain mediocrity rather than foster excellence. Research studies need to be conducted to ensure that those who are selected to mentor novice teachers are in fact the right people for the job or as Collins (2001) writes, " first, get the right people on the bus".

Finally, the research of Denmark & Potdsen (2000), Sweeney (1994) and Glickman (1990) suggests that mentoring novice teachers is a benefit to veteran teachers and creates a sense of renewal. This study will also look for indications of that belief.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to identify the attributes of exemplary mentor teachers as perceived by the teachers themselves and then to determine if these perceptions are congruent with the literature. As cited in Chapter II, the seven competencies of mentor teachers outlined and described by Denmark and Podsen (2000) will be used as the benchmark.

A second question determines the mentor teachers' beliefs about effective instruction through their self-revelations.

A third question relates to the mentor teachers' beliefs and expectations regarding students.

A fourth research question seeks to determine the mentor teacher's beliefs about how best to mentor novice teachers and what they need to know in order to succeed.

The fifth research question asks mentor teachers to describe their beliefs about the educational system.

Design

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach. Data was collected from the subjects through in-depth, confidential interviews. With the permission of the superintendent of schools, the three elementary school principals and two supervisors of secondary school teachers in a public school district in Somerset County, New Jersey

were sent letters asking them to identify exemplary mentor teachers (see Appendix A). To assist them in easily identifying these individuals, the researcher provided descriptors of exemplary teacher/mentors in the four skill areas described by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (Fall, 1999) in its publication, *Creating a Teacher Mentoring Program,* as cited in Chapter I. This list along with other forms of recognition, including "Teacher of the Year", National Board Certification, and other awards for outstanding teachers were used by the principals to aid them in determining exemplary mentor teachers.

All 24 teachers named by the administrators were invited to participate in the study. Seventeen teachers responded to the invitation to participate (see Appendix B). Of the 17, three declined to participate and 14 agreed to participate in the study. The names of the fourteen teachers were placed in a bag and ten names were selected.

This phenomenological method of study as defined by Leedy & Ormrod (2001) is a study that attempts to understand the mentor teachers' perceptions, perspectives, and understandings of the mentoring process. Leedy & Ormand note that in a phenomenogical study "the researcher is often a person who has had personal experience related to the phenomenon in question and wants to gain a better understanding of the experiences of others" (p.153). This researcher is a school administrator who has served as a mentor and teaches a professional development course to teachers on the topic of mentoring new teachers.

Focus Group

The researcher assembled a focus group of five educational administrators that included three assistant elementary principals and two district curriculum supervisors.

This homogeneous focus group served as a panel of experts to aid in the further refinement of the study's design. Patton (2002) notes that a focus group can provide a "needs assessment" for the researcher. In this case, the suggestions and comments of the focus group were considered in ensuring the clarity of the questions to be presented during the mentor interviews.

Data Collection

Cresswell (1998) describes phenomenonological research as dependent on lengthy interviews with carefully selected participants who have had direct experience with the subject matter. Those administrators who know them best carefully selected the subjects for this study. In the case of elementary school teachers, that administrator was the building principal. The high school and middle school teachers in the study were nominated by the content area supervisors due to the large population of the faculty in both schools. The individuals in this study were interviewed for approximately one hour in their various classrooms and school, each being asked the same core questions, but also encouraged to expand upon their thoughts. The meetings began with the researcher explaining the nature of the study, how the tape-recorded data would be used, and the security measures in place to insure confidentiality and anonymity. All of the respondents signed an informed consent form (see Appendix C)

Interview questions related to the study were preceded by three queries intended to elicit background information about the subject being interviewed; these pertain to years of experience in education, and number of novice teachers mentored by the subject (see Appendix D). According to Patton (2002), the purpose of interviewing is to allow a researcher to enter into another person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins

with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful and the fact that feelings, thoughts and intentions cannot be observed; they can only be self-reported. As previously stated, the subjects were identified by the administrators who know them and have observed them in practice as exemplary mentor teachers. The interviews serve as the tool used to identify common traits, attitudes and characteristics.

According to Leedy & Ormrod (2001), qualitative research seeks to interpret and make sense of what is critical for an understanding of any social phenomenon, in this study the phenomenon is highly effective teaching and mentoring. In this sense write Leedy & Ormrod, "...the researcher is an instrument in much the same way a sociogram, rating scale, or intelligence test is an instrument" (p.147). Listening carefully to the subjects and suspending judgement is vital in qualitative research

Data Presentation

The data is organized and presented by research question. Interview questions (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4) were developed to answer the main research question. The second research question was answered by one interview question (2.1). The third research question was answered by one interview question (3.1). The fourth research question was answered by five interview questions (4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5). The fifth research question was answered by one interview question (5.1).

Interview Questions by Research Question

1. What are the attributes of exemplary mentor teachers?

    1.1 How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

    1.2 What has kept you in the classroom for years?

    1.3 What do you believe to be the attributes of an exemplary teacher?

1.4 What do you get from administrators and colleagues that nurtures your desire to continue teaching?

2. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about effective instruction?

2.1 What do you believe are the key elements of effective instruction?

3. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about and expectations of students?

3.1 What do you get from students that nurtures your desire to continue teaching?

4. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about how best to mentor novice teachers and what they need to know in order to succeed?

4.1 What do you believe are the attributes of an effective mentor to novice teachers?

4.2 What are your strategies in mentoring novice teachers?

4.3 What characteristics do novice teachers need to succeed as teachers?

4.4 What aspects of mentoring do you find the most fulfilling? the most challenging?

4.5 What do you get from novices that nurtures your desire to continue teaching

4.5 What are the most important things that novice teachers learn under your guidance?

5. What are their beliefs about the educational system?

5.1 What are your beliefs about the educational system?

The questions pertaining to the perceptions of the role of the mentor teacher were developed by the researcher through a review of the literature and specifically structured

to align with the seven competencies of an effective mentor as outlined by Denmark & Podsen (2000). The researcher took these competencies and turned them into questions that would prompt the subject to describe (1) their understanding of the mentoring role, (2) the nature of the relationship between mentor and novice teacher, (3) the climate of support, (4) the level of reflective practice of the mentor, (5) the application of classroom management strategies, (6) recognition and appreciation of diversity and (7) mentoring as an investment in professional development. This phenomenological study explores how human beings make sense of experiences and transform experience into conscious meaning (Patton, 2002).

As noted in the writing of Cresswell (1998) and Leedy & Ormrod (2001), the researcher examines the interview responses, looking for common themes in the respondents' descriptions of their experiences. Leedy & Ormrod, citing Cresswell (1998) identify four steps to be taken by the researcher after transcribing the interviews:

1. Identify statements that relate to the topic. Sorting the relevant from the irrelevant, the researcher sorts the information gathered into segments that represent individual ideas.
2. Group statements into *meaning units*. Segments are grouped by category.
3. Seek divergent perspectives. Individuals relate to similar experiences in unique ways, the researcher will look for and compare the variety of perceptions.
4. Construct a composite. The researcher will seek to make some generalizations about the experiences of the subjects.

Grounded Theory

In the treatment of the data, the researcher utilized a grounded theory approach. Grounded theory is an emergent research methodology that relies heavily on observation, conversation and interview (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Each subject was assigned a number code to maintain accuracy and anonymity. The first step for the researcher was to transcribe the interviews. The researcher read through all the transcripts as they were written for each interviewee's answers to the field of questions. The data was reorganized by question so that the researcher could read all ten responses to each question. The researcher created a separate matrix for each question and grounded coding was employed. Topics were listed in the rows and the interviewee's number code was listed at the top of columns. Columns were then color coded for school level of the interviewee. Elementary school interviewee's were coded green, middle school blue and high school teachers' yellow. Open coding was employed as the topics were then reread and grouped into categories. Leedy & Ormrod (2001), citing Strauss & Corbin (1998) describe open coding wherein the data are scrutinized for commonalities that reflect categories, or themes within the data. Patterns and exceptions to patterns were examined for each question. Topics were highlighted on the transcripts and the category for the topic was written in the margins. Next, selective coding was put in place with matrices developed to compare and present the responses for each question.

Using a grounded theory approach, interview transcripts were combed on multiple occasions and reliability of the study was attained through these multiple readings, tracking the occurrence of themes in the interviews, employing outside readers, and

obtaining feedback from the interviewees. Theory depicting the evolving nature of the phenomenon in question was based entirely on the data collected.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the qualities of educators who are master teachers and exemplary mentors. More specifically, this study was designed to shed light on the values, attributes, beliefs and practices of these individuals as they relate to the art of teaching and mentoring novice teachers. Qualitative research methodology was employed to gain insights about these perceptions. This chapter represents and analyzes these findings.

Nature of the Study

The research subject population for study consisted of experienced teachers who were determined to be exemplary teachers and mentors in a K-12 public school district in a District Factor Group (DFG) of J in Somerset County New Jersey. The teachers were interviewed at their schools and responded to a series of twelve questions. The interview questions asked were related to the following research questions:

1. What are the attributes of exemplary mentor teachers?
2. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about effective instruction?
3. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs and expectations of students?

4. What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about how best to mentor novice teachers and what the need to know in order to succeed?
5. What are their beliefs about the educational system?

Identification of Exemplary Mentor Teachers

The subjects in this study were identified as exemplary mentor teachers by their building principal, or in the case of the middle school and high school teachers, by their department supervisor. Principals and central-office personnel are in a good position to identify the most outstanding teacher mentors in schools because it is they who have the experience and responsibility for supervising and evaluating teachers. Administrators, more than parents or colleagues, have the opportunity to see many teachers in action in the classroom. They are also aware of the disciplinary issues, parental concerns, expectations of student achievement and specific challenges that that these teachers are facing (Williams, 2003). Permission for conducting this study was obtained from the school district's superintendent. Letters of solicitation were sent to four elementary school principals to identify exemplary elementary school subjects and to curriculum supervisors to identify secondary school subjects.

These administrators were asked to nominate exemplary mentor teachers, those dedicated professionals who are *beyond good*. To aid the administrators in their selection of the teachers chosen for this study the letter illustrated attributes of exemplary mentor teachers as described in a report by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (Fall, 1999). The four skill areas included:

1. Attitude and Character: Teachers who:
    (a) Have the desire to be a role model for other teachers
    (b) Exhibit strong commitment to the teaching profession
    (c) Believe mentoring improves instructional practice
    (d) Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning
    (e) Are reflective and able to learn from mistakes
2. Professional Competence and Experience: Teachers who:
    (a) Are regarded by colleagues as outstanding teachers
    (b) Possess excellent knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter
    (c) Demonstrate excellent classroom management skills
    (d) Feel comfortable being observed by other teachers
    (e) Understand the policies and procedures of the school and district
3. Communication Skills: Teachers who:
    (a) Articulate effective instructional strategies
    (b) Listen attentively
    (c) Ask questions that prompt reflection and understanding
    (d) Offer critiques in positive and productive ways
    (e) Convey enthusiasm and passion for teaching
4. Interpersonal Skills: Teachers who:
    (a) Maintain trusting professional relationships
    (b) Have the ability to care for a protege's emotional and professional needs
    (c) Are attentive to sensitive political issues
    (d) Are approachable and demonstrate good rapport with others

(e) Are patient

In addition, the teachers recommended were to currently teach in the school district, have ten or more years of experience as a teacher in the district or elsewhere and have served as a formal or informal mentor to novice and student teachers.

Twenty-four teachers were nominated by three of the four principals and two department supervisors. The administrators contacted clearly took the stated criteria into consideration as indicated by the fourth elementary school principal who expressed that she was unable to nominate any teacher for this study. In replying to the letter of solicitation, she reported, "Only three teachers have ten or more years of experience and, unfortunately, I can't identify them as *exemplary mentor* teachers."

Secondary to administrator nomination, two other forms of recognition were to serve as validation of the qualification of these teachers as exemplary including district level Teacher of the Year recognition, a peer selected designation, and National Board certification. Five of the teachers nominated were past recipients of Teacher of the Year recognition. At the time of this study, none of the district's teachers have attained National Board certification.

Twenty-four teachers were nominated as exemplary mentor teachers. All were sent a letter of solicitation inviting them to participate in the study. Of the 17 teachers who replied, 14 agreed to participate, three declined to participate and seven did not reply. Ten teachers of the 14 who agreed to participate in the study were selected by random drawing. The Teacher Reply Rate is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher Reply Rate

Teachers nominated	24	
Replied		17
Willing to participate		14
Selected for Interview		10

Characteristics of the Subjects

The ten teachers interviewed were first asked a series of background questions to learn more about the subjects participating in the interview. Teachers were asked about the number of years they had been teaching, their current assignments, their age and the highest degree of education attained. The characteristics of the subjects are represented graphically in Table 2. It was explained to them that the study sought to learn the number of novice teachers they had each mentored. This term was clarified for them to include formal mentoring, informal mentoring and student teachers mentored.

Two (20%) of the subjects were male and eight (80%) were female. Five subjects (50%) taught at the elementary school level, two (20%) taught at the middle school level and three (30%) taught at the high school level. The minimum number of years of

experience required of participants was ten. The range of years experience was ten to 33. Their mean number of years experience was 16. Teachers ranged in age from 32 to 57 years of age. The mean age of this group was 45 years. The mean number of novice teachers mentored was 8.6 teachers. The range was two to 27. Seven (70%) of the ten teachers hold a master's degree and the rest hold a bachelor's degree.

Table 2

Characteristics of the Subjects

Teacher	Gender	Teaching Level ES	MS	HS	# yrs Exper.	Age	# Mentees	Highest Degree
1	F	Kdg.			20	42	2	BA
2	F	PE			20	47	5	MA
3	F		Math		17	47	3	MA
4	F			Math	33	57	27	MA
5	F			LA	19	57	13	BA
6	M		LA		12	42	9	MA
7	F	1st			15	37	5	BA
8	M		LA		12	32	4	MA
9	F	4th			10	32	9	MA
10	F	3rd			22	57	9	MA

Note. ES= Elementary School, MS= Middle School, HS= High School

Kdg. = Kindergarten, PE = Physical Education, LA = Language Arts

Presentation and Data Analysis

This presentation is organized to provide the data in a structured manner in order to answer the main research question: What are the attributes of exemplary mentor teachers? The presentation is structured to provide the data to also address the four subsidiary questions: What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about effective instruction? What are the mentor teachers' beliefs and expectations of students? What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about how best to mentor novice teachers and what they need to know in order to succeed? What are their beliefs about the educational system?

Leedy & Ormrod (2001) suggest that a qualitative research study typically describes the nature of certain situations, relationships, processes or people. In this case, the researcher gained certain insights about the nature of the exemplary mentor teacher, their beliefs and their practices.

Attitude and Character

When asked to describe themselves, several shared traits of exemplary mentor teachers were revealed such as: "love for what they do", "desire to help students", and "to share knowledge". Their answers revolved around character traits rather than technical expertise. Teacher One took a break from setting up her kindergarten classroom on a hot, sticky August afternoon to reflect on her motivation to teach and to mentor. She opened by describing herself to the interviewer:

> With the children, especially with kindergarten, I don't baby them. I speak to them like you would speak to anybody you were talking to. I have high expectations. But on the other hand everybody comes with different issues to school and I try to keep in mind that they are individuals and address their needs.

> Someone once told me that when you're teaching and you have certain kids that have certain special needs, other kids will say well why does he get to do this and I don't and she would say, what you say is "what's fair is not always equal" and ... that's what I keep in the back of my brain all the time and children understand that.

Five of the teachers referred to themselves as "child-centered" or "student-centered". In this district, it is not only primary school teachers who come to school during the summer to prepare for the new school year. One of the high school language arts teachers (Teacher Five) soberly expressed herself: "I care about the kids as people. (I am) also very passionate about my subject matter. So, I'd say those are the two motivations for my teaching: passion for the literature that I teach, which I love and, I'm very interested in the kids as whole people, not just as English learners."

Their passion for what they do and concern for their students were underlying themes that were evident in their response to questions about themselves as teachers (Q1.1); what keeps them in the classroom (Q1.2); what are the attributes of an exemplary teacher (Q1.3), and what they get from administrators and colleagues that nurtures their desire to continue teaching (Q1.4a, 1.4b). The words teachers use to describe themselves include: "life-long learner", "motivator", "facilitator", "flexible", "fair", "compassionate" and "down to earth".

Expanding on the topic of *continual learning* varied by the grade level of the teachers as much as their individual personalities. After describing herself as: "Motivated. Energetic. Dedicated. Committed to kids" Teacher Seven, a first grade teacher stated: "I think (I am) always looking to challenge myself actually. I'm always

still reading and always online and subscribe to all fun magazines trying to keep myself motivated not just the kids."

Not all continuous learning is formal as expressed by Teacher Four, a high school math teacher:

> I think you need to always try to do different and hopefully better.... I think you always have to be working at your craft. I think you need to keep on top of things in terms of workshops and just reading newspaper articles and seeing how that relates and always talking to people - be they students, parents, other teachers. What are you doing? How are you doing it? Why are you doing it that way? I think you (should) network with all discipline teachers to find out what they are doing and how they are doing it. I love being in workshops with younger teachers to hear some of their new ideas and their new strategies. ...working at your craft - always thinking about it. If you're not actually teaching, you should to be thinking about it or how you might do something differently. Or gee, that's kind of an interesting poster, yeah; maybe I'll bring that in. My new thing now is that I watched TV this summer and I'm noticing the mathematics in commercials. And so I worked camp this summer, Camp [redacted], at the high school and my last day, cause it should be a more fun day, I brought in little snippets of movies to show math in the movies, but I didn't bring in *A Beautiful Mind*, which was about a mathematician. I brought in *Alice in Wonderland*, because there's a little logic puzzle in there in the middle of it. ... you always have to be looking for ways of relating your subject area or your grade level to what's out there to tie into it. I think that's what makes a really good teacher.

Teacher Eight, a very serious young man in his thirties, taught at the college level as a teaching assistant in graduate school, but chose to teach high school after completing his graduate program. He explained his background and his role as a *facilitator of learning* stating:

> I think the benefit that I had coming into this particular position is that I started teaching at the college level first where there were no guidelines, there were no expectation, so I was forced to, sort of, define my style. . . .It was a communications classroom, so when teaching ... personal communication, oral communication and group communication, there's a lot of emphasis on the dialogue with the students. ... that whole concept of, you know, "sage on the stage" was never part of my parameters or my paradigm because you can't do that in a communication based classroom. So when I came to the secondary level, all of a sudden, I had to approach it because that's the only way I knew how to teach. It was much more of a facilitator than a dialogue - allowing students the opportunities, the abilities, the guidance to take material such as literature, analyze it, evaluate it and express their ideas about it, raising questions providing analysis, providing interpretation in a very open communication type of environment. So when I look at how I describe myself as a teacher, it's really much more of a facilitator. It's someone who is there to guide, provides the necessary direction to do it, the necessary ingredients if you will, but at the end of the day the students are the ones who are going to have to take ownership of what they learned. So therefore, my approach is, all right here's what I'm going to give you, now you need to put it together. So I really look at it as a facilitator, of

discussion and of learning, of introspection, of critical thought. That's the way I look at it.

Asking the teachers what kept them in the classroom illuminated for the interviewer, their motivation to remain in their field and further revealed much about their relationship with their students. Eight of the ten subjects, when asked what kept them in the classroom (Q1.2) responded "the children". Teacher Eight quickly responded "students" when asked what kept him in the classroom as he further explained the importance of his relationship with his students by stating:

> I was all set to go straight from Bachelors to Masters, Ph.D. and teach in a college. There was no question about it. Went through my undergraduate, started in communications, added education after that cause I always knew I wanted to teach. Had a great student teaching experience. Went straight through to the masters. Got the TA-ship like you're supposed to and really found that I didn't like teaching the college level as much because just when you were starting to develop that relationship where you thought I'm making a difference, what I'm doing has meaning, they're done and you never see them again. As opposed to the high school level, where it seems like the students care about you as the teacher as you do about the students. Whether it's good or bad, it's sort of the intrinsic value in what they're doing there. And they give more of themselves in that process. At the college level, I found you are a means to an end. You're here for a degree, that's it. In the high school level, kids don't necessarily see that end yet. They're not sure what that end is yet because they still don't know who they are, so that is what's kept me in secondary.

Now what's kept me in the classroom has been everything from my growth as a teacher, the types of students that I've been teaching. I've only taught a couple of ninth grade sections, once in a blue moon, but it's always been the senior level courses and the speech courses. And those students are so driven because they see their goals in sight and they want to do well and they want to achieve this. The type of curriculum that I address is communications, language arts, it's skills that they see very necessary to what they're doing. So, they give me a little bit of that feedback and I give it back to them, and so it's very transactional and interrelational as opposed to, you know, if I was teaching sophomores all day long, I don't know if I'd have that same perspective.

People ask me why haven't you gone into administration or why haven't I gone corporate, because my master's is in organizational communications, it was more in corporate training. I thought, well, if I'm teaching at a college, I have to make money some other way because they (college instructors) don't make it. I think there's just a dynamic in secondary ed that can't be achieved in other elements and I don't know if I would like being an administrator cooped up in an office or dealing with, you know, issues that seem to get in the way of education. To be perfectly honest, if I wanted to go into administration, I'd want to go into Business Law, become the board secretary because I'm a mathematician. I started off school as a math major, ended up in English because of the right teachers, the right professors at the right time, and got sick of calculus while I had this amazing debate person. So people ask me "Do you ever see yourself leaving the classroom?" I don't know. Twenty years from now I could still be doing this, or I

could be working at Pfizer doing corporate training, or I could be a curriculum supervisor. I just take one year at a time and right now I enjoy too much what I'm doing to leave.

The other high school language arts teacher explained what kept her in the classroom these nineteen years as:

> I think for me it's a way for me to *impact the next generation* or, *to make my mark on the world* or *to have significance*, or however you want to phrase that. And so, the fact that I'm investing my life and the lives of the next generation is very important to me and it keeps me coming back even when some things are hard and boring. I love the 'Ah Ha' moments and if I have if I have a couple of them a month it keeps me going."

Other veteran teachers, at the other end of the educational continuum, the primary level, express their reasons for remaining in the classroom with much the same level of enthusiasm: "I think especially with little children, young children. I think they keep you young. I think every time they come in, they're looking at the world and they've only been on this planet for five or six years and I think that's so refreshing. Everything they're doing is basically for the first time," stated the kindergarten teacher (Teacher One) with twenty years of experience.

An overarching theme of the teachers who participated in the study was a deep sense of *teaching as a calling* referring to the profession as a "vocation" and their "commitment to kids". Teacher Four, a high school math teacher with over 30 years of experience, explained it the following way:

Teaching is a vocation for me. One of the things that distresses me now is that I meet a lot of younger teachers who consider it a job. And their attitude is if it doesn't work out, I'll just get another job someplace else. And I think it needs to be more than that. I've always wanted to be a teacher, since I'm seven, since I first walked into school. I thought – I really like this. I want to be a teacher, and I've never had any other aspirations.

Eight of the ten teachers in this study consider themselves "lifelong learners". In the context of being a lifelong learner, the word "commitment" came up again as Teacher Eight related: "...when I say commitment, I mean in a couple of different manners. Commitment to the profession that you're going to stay in tune with the profession. That you want to read about it – you don't take it for granted. Education is constantly changing, and as a professional in education, you have to change along with it." Fullan (2002) would applaud this teacher's response as it indicates the knowledge and acceptance of change taking place as well as the motivation and willingness to change.

As the teachers in this study responded, they chose several terms to express the rewards of teaching. Two teachers specifically commented on teaching "keeping them young". Teacher Ten, a third grade teacher with twenty-two years of experience, explained: "I feel invigorated in the classroom. I think it keeps us young; I really do, interacting with the kids. I love the age I teach because they can still be awed by you."

The teachers in this study appreciate the sense of renewal that comes with their jobs. As the female first grade teacher (Teacher Seven) stated: "You really have to have a passion for it (teaching) to not become burnt out and I still get very excited every September." The male middle school teacher (Teacher Six) told of his enjoyment in

starting fresh every September, relating that, to him, "September was like January" on the "kid calendar". The fourth grade teacher (Teacher Nine) with ten years of experience put it this way: "I feel excited every year...when I walk into my job, when I'm setting up my classroom in the summer, I can't wait." She went on to relate that she doesn't like being off for great lengths of time in the summer. She feels a "thrill"; an "excitement" and she "can't wait to get back to school."

The attribute of an exemplary mentor teacher that was universal to every teacher in this study was their overall "positive attitude" toward children, learning, teaching and the desire to share their knowledge. As Teacher Five expressed it:

> I think you have to really care about the next generation in our culture and in our world if you're going to be an effective, a highly effective teacher, you have to care that they're well prepared to live their lives and to lead the world. I think you're much more effective if you love what you're teaching, if you love the subject matter, and you yourself are an inquisitive person in your subject area. For me, certainly, caring about the kids is absolutely essential.

When asked: Why do you mentor? These exemplary teachers responded with very little hesitation and a great deal of uniformity. Seven teachers reported confidence that they had good experiences to offer. As Teacher Three answered, "I mentor because I feel that I have something good to offer them (novice teachers). I try never to be negative. I'm dedicated to what I do. I love what do, so I feel that I could have some good influence, some positive results or interaction with a new teacher."

Teacher Seven stated with humor and modesty:

> You feel like you've really nurtured them and coddled them and watched them and given them wings to kind of fly and that you have really helped them. I never say no (to mentoring)." Hesitating and finally ending more emphatically, "This is going to sound conceited, so throw the tape out when you're done. Don't ever show [redacted] (the principal) because I sound like an idiot. You know what, I have a daughter and when she is in school, I want her to have excited, energetic teachers, so I want to be that for all those (novice) teachers. I want her to have that every year. So, I want to make as many of them (novice teachers) and help them along as I can. Really.

The desire to help was named as the reason for mentoring by seven teachers. Reflecting back on their own early years, six teachers noted that they remembered what it was like during those first few years in teaching:

> I kind of feel that, I mean I do that (mentor) anyway. I just do that automatically. I remember how difficult it was when I first started teaching. I still remember the people who were encouragers to me, and who were mentors to me. It was all informal mentoring. ...For me it was just the affirmation and encouragement, the sharing of materials, the helping me to talk through things that just felt like huge mountains, break it down into small tasks, that kind of thing. That was really important to me and it's important for me to do that for other people." - Teacher Five.

> "Why do I mentor?" I don't know. It's one of those questions that I never even thought about. It's just a matter of doing it because I feel we, as professionals,

have to sustain it. And if I can help…I think agreeing and being a mentor is just a formalized way of doing something I would have done or have always have done over the years. Back to that first year, yeah, I met with my mentor for twenty minutes. Does that mean I didn't have mentors? No. They didn't get recognized for it, but they provided me with some of the guides. I could tell you some specific lines from some specific teachers that they probably thought was so insignificant but I've carried them with me these past ten years and hold on (to them) and I now tell them to the (new) teachers because so and so told me this back in 1996. It's my turn, ten years later, now to tell you. – Teacher Eight.

I think cause I could remember when I was a teacher. In the beginning you really feel, "oh my gosh, there's so much to do." … until you have a few years under your belt, it's just, there's that element of fear and learning and excitement and experience, like as you're getting experience. So many people reached out to me, and were good mentors and I just want to share that with other people. You know, help them succeed so that they don't feel that they're alone, cause in this job you would be, cause you're with your kids, you're in a classroom, but you have to interact with colleagues. For so many reasons …that's why. – Teacher Nine.

I don't think that I would have been comfortable doing this (mentoring) a number of years ago. Some of the feedback I've gotten has made me feel better about myself … to finally get to the point where I feel that I have something to offer. I enjoy the interaction with peers. I enjoy just helping in whatever way that I can and hopefully (I'm) not intimidating. This is almost getting cocky, and I'm not

that kind of person. You know some of these things I've done really work. And knowing this is a way to share some of them. - Teacher Ten.

Four recognized those experienced teachers who had helped them in the early years of their careers. Two spoke of mentoring as a great learning experience. As the kindergarten teacher summarized, "You learn from them as much as they learn from you."

Four spoke of wanting to be a "positive influence" on new teachers and three teachers reinforced this by stating, "I love what I do!" One teacher expressed her belief that mentoring was "an honor". And finally, one teacher spoke soberly of the responsibility that experienced teachers have to "sustain the profession".

When asked, what do you get from administrators that nurtures your desire to continue teaching? Six teachers indicated the importance of affirmation from administrators. Teacher Five responded: "Mainly affirmation - I should remember that as a mentor. When I am affirmed for what I do well that's much more effective than when things that I'm not doing well are pointed out. Although sometimes that has to happen, but that's (affirmation) much more effective for me. I need to remember that with my students too."

An elementary school teacher (Teacher One) referred to the affirmation from administrators this way:

> The pat on the back is nice. You know, to hear that I'm doing a good job. Sometimes I don't think that I hear it enough because I'm very hard on myself. I think because I've been in it for so long, I think people think that oh, you look so secure and you look like you know what you're doing and you don't need

anything said. But sometimes I think if someone would come in and go, "Wow, that was really great what you did!" or "Wow, I heard parents appreciated what you did with blah, blah, blah." I think, you know, you still need it. You're getting older and you've been here for a while, but you still need someone to say, you know, "You're doing a good job." And I don't think I hear that enough. But you know what, it just might be me. Maybe I'm too sensitive.

Teacher Three expressed similar feelings by stating:

...positive reinforcement or positive comments or reflections. When they see that or they've heard I'm doing a good job or they observe me and they see good things that they let me know cause there are times standing up in the front I'm always wondering what am I looking like or what am I sounding like? And so when administrators can affirm that cause I think I'm doing a good job. I'm getting a good response from the students. Things are looking good. I feel very comfortable what I'm doing, so when I get that affirmation or that confirmation, then I feel, well I guess I'm on track.

When asked, what do you get from your colleagues that nurtures your desire to continue teaching the teachers spoke of the opportunity to share new ideas, and share experiences about their students.

The very cheerful high school Math teacher exclaimed:

Oh, my goodness! That's one reason I'm here, wonderful colleagues.

...intellectual stimulation that stirs up my passion again when things just get kind of boring and hard and people and work is piling up. Ideas - a place where I can

have somebody else. It's the colleague situation here (it) is fabulous for all those reasons; they do everything that colleagues should do.

Teacher Six revealed the importance of good colleagues when he stated:

I work with a great team. We're so lucky that we are people who actually like each other, however I've been on the other side. I've been with people - I've been with tense situations where people - I've been in the middle like that. That could take away all the motivation of doing a good job for the kids. So the team approach over at [redacted] works very well because my team - we've been together - it will be the third year. We like each other, we get along, we laugh a lot, but on the other side, if you have somebody who's a vampire or that - it could go the other way. And unfortunately if it every happened with my team we had one who just was the weak link, I would not really, I would not be sad to see them go.

Communication Skills

The second research question was: What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about effective instruction? This question also addresses communication skills. The ability to articulate effective instructional strategies requires good communication skills (National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, 1999). Teacher Eight, the high school language arts teacher who specializes in communications courses, not surprisingly, had a great deal to say about the importance of communication in terms of connecting with students. "The first thing with effective instruction is the ability and willingness to communicate. It's the ability and willingness to take risks. It's the ability and willingness to be innovative. Because, unless you have that, the objectives don't matter,

the dichotomy doesn't matter, because you're not connecting. And until you make that connection with students, nothing else is going to follow. So that's it!"

Teacher Nine had served in the capacity of the teacher of gifted and talented students in her school, but had elected to return to the role of fourth grade teacher responded by saying:

> I'd say presenting material in a variety of ways. Offering choice. Incorporating hands-on activities. And I think having a balance between what's teacher directed, what's student directed. You know having a balance in the classroom. And making sure that there's always follow-up, that's important. So you can be affecting and checking for understanding. Did they understand what you taught them, or what they were supposed to get out of the objectives that you set for them? I guess setting objectives would be first too. Making sure you set clear objectives. I think sharing the objectives with the kids is important. Get into that habit and then make sure that you assess as to whether or not goals are achieved.

Teacher Ten shared her beliefs about effective instruction by relating:

> Make sure … the children are interested; that you have their attention and you know it's something that they see the benefit in. That they have a sense of comfort, and again that comes through whether it's our math program or things we do where we emphasize to the kids that there's not a right, sometimes there's more than one right answer. I think … I take the time to look at things to make sure … I'm logical … it's really important to me, when I reflect on what I'm going to do, that it has that kind of logic or makes sense to them also. Making

> sure that there's understanding along the way, and again, I like to think of it as, doesn't everybody do this. My teaching has changed over the years. . . . Being an effective instructor is being able to monitor and adjust what's not working and coming up with things. Going back to describing myself as a teacher, the ability to think on your feet, come up with analogies very quickly that are meaningful to the kids so they can make those connections. And if anything, the strength that I have being able to do that on my feet and come up with so that they can understand in their own way. I had a student three years ago (who) wrote me this very nice letter - she could have been doing an evaluation. A very bright little girl, and I've saved this at home and she listed what she saw in me as a teacher. This is a third grader. And one of the things she put was that (I was) always making sure that everybody understands everything before we go on.

Six of the ten teachers in the study spoke of the need to "understand your students" or "know your kids". The six respondents all felt the need to expand on this idea clarifying for the researcher the levels of which a teacher must understand their students including the importance of "picking up on body language" and reading young learners actions for signs of inattention. Interviewed in her classroom several days before school opened in September, the kindergarten teacher spoke of the need to have a variety of strategies in one's repertoire as she emphasized the need to have "a bag of tricks" to keep five year olds focused.

Others addressed "knowing your students" by adding the aspect of the diversity of students from various socio-economic backgrounds, with emotional problems or the

developmental level of students. The elementary physical education offered her insight by responding:

> Having an understanding of the students that you're teaching I think is very, very important. Whether you're teaching at various socioeconomic (levels), whether you're teaching at a school where students have severe emotional problems, ... a true understanding of where your students are and taking a look at that. ... taking a look at developmental levels that your student are at, I think that also plays a significant role and ... finding out a little bit, maybe prior knowledge, where the students are at. Trying to get an idea just where the students are. I think you need to have a very good understanding of your students to be effective and to know where they are coming from.

Three other teachers also named "taking risks" as an element of effective instruction. This compliments the message that these are confident educators who are not afraid to make mistakes. Several teachers felt it important to mention that they encourage their mentees to try out new strategies for instruction. Others spoke of professionally recognized, Madeleine Hunter, techniques of instructional practice including: setting clear objectives, checking for understanding, and the ability to monitor and adjust your instruction as the lesson unfolds. Five of the ten teachers addressed the need to have a "good understanding of subject matter". And, once again, "being organized" and "listening" were named, this time, as key attributes of effective instruction.

Students and the Desire to Continue Teaching

The third research question asks: What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about and expectations of students? When asked what they got from students that nurtured their

desire to continue teaching, teachers at all levels spoke of the energy and excitement that came from seeing the growth in their students and the satisfaction that came from knowing that they were responsible for this growth and independence. Five of the ten teachers used the term "the ah-ha moments" in speaking of that instant when things click for a student. Probing further into what motivated teachers the interviewer asked, "What do you get from students that nurtures your desire to continue teaching?" The elementary school physical education teacher (Teacher Two) put it this way: "Their willingness to learn. ... the *ah-hah moments*. You see the kids get it and just being able to look and say 'you've made a difference'. You know where they were and where they are now. ...There's a lot of ways ... in which a student can grow. It's not just as far as skills. That's what keeps me coming back."

Teacher Five also used the term *ah-hah moments* as she replied:

> Like I say, the little *ah-hah moments* when things click and when I see an intellectual engagement with what's going on. When I see something that we've talked about in class applied in another setting, maybe to another novel, maybe another class. Or, if I see the kids bring something from psychology into my class and being able to apply it. So, when I see things beginning to ... come together and provide an educational base that isn't going to make them successful necessarily, in only my class but, that will be part of the cultural reservoir you need when you go off in to life as an adult, that will make you a more effective citizen of our country and the world - that's very, very satisfying to me.

A fourth grade teacher told of what she got from students that nurtured her desire to continue teaching by relating:

Well, definitely the number one thing that pops into my head is when they learn something and you see it on their face. Like everyone says that "*ah-hah moment*", but I really think that's true. Like when you first see them *get it* and they seem so proud of themselves and you praise them. Just seeing that, and I get that from students. I feel just very proud of them. I don't know necessarily that it's because of me, maybe I have a part, but that keeps me going. I guess it's also just seeing children developing and they're learning more. They're also developing character traits and they're making friends and they're hopefully becoming good people. I think really a role that I have, in addition to just teaching what the curriculum says, is helping them to be the best people; to be kind people. That's really important to me." In all, four of the exemplary mentor teachers used the word "excitement" and spoke of the "ah-ha" moments meaning the thrill of being there for the moment that a student "gets it" at last due to their teaching.

The growth that they enjoyed seeing in their students was not confined to academic growth but related to emotional growth and maturity as well. Teachers spoke of their role in their students' lives and knowing that they had a part in the development of good character. In reflecting on her perception of a teacher's responsibilities, a fourth grade teacher stated, "A role that I have, in addition to just teaching what the curriculum says, is helping them be the best people, to be kind people. That's really important to me.

The teachers in the study enjoy their relationship with their students and the positive feedback that comes their way. As the kindergarten teacher shared, "...they (the children) think you are the sun, the moon and the stars".

The Role of the Mentor

The fourth research question was: What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about how best to mentor novice teachers and what they need to know in order to succeed?

The subjects in this study were asked to describe the attributes of an effective mentor. In analyzing their responses, the researcher grouped common responses into three categories: "supportive", "good communicator" and "trusting". In explaining how they support the novice teachers, six subjects emphasized the importance of "availability", to "be there". A middle school teacher stated, "Sometimes a bad day, a bad parent communication could be just awful for a teacher that's just starting out. It could ruin somebody. And I think you just have to tell the novice teacher that it's just part of the job. And, learning from those tough experiences makes the next one a little easier". Six of the ten teachers spoke of the importance of remembering their own early experiences and relating to the novice the lessons they've learned through their experience. Five of the teachers included the importance of supporting the novice by letting them know that their mentor wants them to succeed and as the kindergarten teacher put it, "You want them to try their ideas out. But, you also don't want them to fall flat on their face. Because, again, you have the experience behind you, and I think you want them to feel good about what they're doing, but you also want to say this is what could happen or you might want to talk to the (student's) parents about this before

you do that. I think your experience helps them". The middle school Math teacher stated, "They (mentors) need to be patient. They need to be supportive. They need to be there".

Good communication came up many times in the interviews with the words, listening, asking open-ended questions, reflective practice and parent communication. Six of the ten teachers specifically named good communicator as an attribute of an effective mentor. An elementary school physical education teacher, in addressing reflective practice of novice teachers, explained that she likes to ask the novice how they felt a lesson went, how they might change the lesson if they had the opportunity to do it again. She asks her mentees to critique her lessons as well as their own. This teacher's questions to the novice teacher include, "Did you see what that student did? How do you feel your students' interactions were? Do you feel you met your objectives? Were there some students that you feel you missed?" She continued by adding, "Just kind of asking open-ended questions to get them to think about some things that they might need to take a look at and get them to think about it". Included in communication is the importance of feedback. This same physical education teacher spoke of the importance of observing the novice teacher and giving him or her feedback that is "specific" and "focused".

The third category of responses related to the attributes of the exemplary mentor teacher was trust. Responses that spoke of building relationships, not being judgmental and maintaining confidentiality were classified as issues of trust. Six of the respondents addressed the importance of developing a positive relationship with their novice teachers. A high school language arts teacher responded:

> ...the personal relationships are the most important aspect of the mentoring because until that person trusts you, there's going to be an edge; there's going to

be a level of dissonance; there's going to be caution when one (the mentor) comes into the classroom. So that's why, when I talk to other mentors, the first thing I say is that you have to establish a relationship before you can even start talking about classroom issues because if they see you as this is the mentor, this is the sage, this person knows what they're doing, they're going to be judging me negatively and then they're going to hold it against me and I'm doomed to failure and I don't want to disappoint them. All of these factors go into it; so there has to be, I don't want to say, friendship, but there has to be a mutual trust that I'm not here as someone to direct you, but as someone who can lead you.

Three teachers used the term "don't judge" in their responses. Three others spoke of the need to "maintain confidentiality" and "trust" in the relationship between mentor and novice teacher.

When citing specific strategies they used with novice teachers, five subjects responded "listening" to the novice teacher and demonstrating an understanding of the needs of the a new teacher. Five teachers responded by saying that they shared materials and ideas with the novice teacher. The same number brought up communication again, this time in terms of "keeping the door open", being "proactive" in checking-in with their mentee, and anticipating their needs. Four teachers also talked about observation when it came to strategies to help novice teachers. Observation included novice observing the mentor and mentor observing the novice. Two teachers addressed the importance of encouraging novice teachers to be self-reflective about their lessons.

When asked the question: What do novice teachers need to succeed? Five teachers responded, "good planning". "Flexibility" was the reply of five teachers. Four

teachers responded, "knowledge of subject matter". Three teachers spoke of "classroom management". They elaborated on that term by including transition, focus and strategies for behavior in their answers. Three teachers emphasized the importance of "authority" when discussing the needs of novice teachers. They explained it as, "acting like you're in charge". Two high school teachers cautioned novice teachers "not to be a friend" to their students. As a male teacher explaining this stated:

> One of the biggest, eye opening experiences for me was realizing that I am not necessarily their friend. And that's really tough when you're teaching seniors and you're only 24. It took me about three years to come to that realization of how to connect with students without crossing that threshold. I always needed to be the teacher that everybody liked. And that took me a while to get over.

Other advice for novice teachers included: "patience", "willingness to change", "openness to new ideas", "desire to make a difference", and the need to "care about children". In describing what she felt novice teachers needed to know to be successful, the middle school math teacher with seventeen years of experience stated:

> I think the biggest thing is that it's going to take time and, it's going to take experience. The first year - you make a lot of mistakes. And, as long as you're willing to learn from them and you're willing to go back and realize, well, everybody makes mistakes. You're willing to change...I mean I still am learning to change. I still want to be better.

Fullan (2002) says a school's culture has a great deal of influence on life and learning within the school community. Teachers, particularly veteran teachers who are leaders, make a large contribution to shaping the school culture. If those teacher leaders

demonstrate a willingness to change, they model that change to their mentees and contribute to a culture of change in their respective schools.

To further understand the exemplary mentor teacher, the researcher asked them to name the aspects of mentoring that they found the most fulfilling and those that they found to be the most challenging. In response to the fulfilling aspects of mentoring, seven of the ten teachers' responses were categorized as "helping". One of the seven stated: "Just helping somebody, to provide support so that they (novices) will stick with it through the really hard first weeks and months." Five teachers spoke of the value of the mentoring in that it improved their own teaching and required them to reflect on their own practice. As the physical education teacher explained, "...it (mentoring) gives you an opportunity to reflect quite a bit on your own teaching and sometimes question why you're doing things or how you're doing them." Four of these experienced teachers also spoke of "learning from novice teachers". Three teachers mentioned what can be categorized as "contributing to the profession" as described by a middle school teacher, "...they're the future of what I'm doing, so for me, to have some influence on them...whether they remember me or not, it just kind of contributes to the educational future, I guess." Three teachers also felt that the opportunity to "see a new teacher grow" was the most fulfilling part of mentoring.

When asked to name the most challenging aspect of working with novice teachers, five of the teachers responded that they were uncomfortable correcting novice teachers. The subjects had no desire to be in a supervisory role with their mentees. As one high school teacher stated, "we're not supervisors, we're colleagues". Four teachers related that the challenge they found was watching novice teachers make mistakes, after

they've advised them that what they were doing was a mistake. A first grade teacher explained a situation with a novice teacher she had mentored stating:

> ...I really felt like discipline was a weak area for her. We talked about it and we talked about it and we came up with a ton of different things she could try. She tried just one or two and then somehow just lost control of the class. And, there went her really well planned lesson, out the window, because they're no longer paying attention. And then you think, O.K., how can I say this a different way? Because it's so important, and she needs to learn. I've tried being nice, and now I'm going to try to be a little more firm, but you don't want to crush them, because they're super fragile.

Her frustration and concern were evident in her facial expression and tone, an further indicator of the intenseness of the mentor and the seriousness with which she assumed her role.

Two teachers expressed the issue of the "time" involved with mentoring novice teachers as a challenge. Again, frustration could be heard in the responses of these teachers as they struggled to meet the needs of their students, their mentees, and their own personal needs. The interviews were often peppered with remarks about broken copy machines and the volume of work that kept them from meeting to their mentees as often as they would have liked.

The final interview question used to understand this research question was: What are the most important things that novice teachers learn under your guidance? Four of the subject teachers responded by referring to the novice teacher seeing the mentor teacher's "work ethic". They spoke with pride about how hard they work and expect

nothing less of their mentees. These are teachers who go above and beyond their contracted duties as illustrated by the high school math teacher who related the many evening visits to the home of one of "her seniors" who had broken his leg, tutoring him, at no cost, so that he wouldn't fall behind in her class. Throughout the study, six teachers used the term "it's not a nine to five job". Though their contract is very specific in stipulating the hours and days that they were required to work, the researcher's interviews took place in August before they were required to be present. They were working in their classrooms getting them ready for the new school year or in September after regular school hours. These were teachers who are on the job until the work is done.

Three respondents emphasized the need for novice teachers to be "organized". These teachers' classrooms illustrated their definition of organized. Bulletin boards were crisp and up-to-date, books and materials were neatly stacked and labeled. Three teachers hoped that the novice teachers saw how much they "care about their students". Several teachers appeared embarrassed when their eyes welled-up as they spoke about their students and their role as teachers, further demonstrating their level of dedication to the researcher. Three teachers said that novice teachers would learn that good teachers are positive people. As a whole, this group of ten teachers could be categorized as positive people. They are cheerful, enthusiastic and hopeful as they told about their plans for the upcoming school year. Three teachers repeated being "life-long learners" in their list of things that novice teachers learn from them. In addition, the mentor teachers named "flexibility", "sense of humor", "time management", and "differentiation of instruction".

Beliefs About Educational System

The final research question of this study asked: What are your beliefs about education? The question was deliberately left open to interpretation with some teachers addressing education on the local level, others addressing it on the national level, and some teachers responding to local, state and national levels. Teachers had both negative and positive views about the educational system.

The kindergarten teacher initially responded that "great things are going on" and she believed that the United States educational system did a good job of teaching problem solving to children. She expressed the need to foster creativity in students and the need to respect their individual learning styles, particularly in regard to children arriving at the same solution using a variety of problem solving techniques. However, she was distressed that some of her students' parents were more interested in a rote method that emphasized "kill and drill". Teacher One then moved to negative feelings about parenting styles saying, "I will get on my early childhood bandwagon..." as she expressed concerns about young children in grades kindergarten to three whose lives are overscheduled with after school activities and her dismay that students of this age no longer had unstructured play time. She concluded by stating, "Our kindergartners are in school all day, and then, they're rushed off to their gymnastics or ballet."

The elementary physical education teacher expressed her belief that the local school district in which she worked was doing a very good job of preparing students, but on a state level, the urban schools were failing. She commented on the urban districts putting a great deal of money into their schools, but questioned the effectiveness of it stating:

> I think what we have to take a look at is not just the schools, but the societies within those communities and take a look at educating the parents and the people within those communities and maybe even within society itself. But that's a tough, tough thing to do I think as a society, I think we have to ask ourselves and America, What is important for our schools and children? Is it just grades and the academics or is there a broader aspect to what they need to learn?

The middle school math teacher (Teacher Three) expressed conflicting feelings about education today, concern for the increasing difficulty of the job of teaching and, the complexity of today's students stating:

> I think I've seen the system change a lot, which I think is a good thing. I think society expects different things from teachers today than they did years ago. I think our job has gotten harder. The type of student I deal with has changed. I have more special education students in my classes. How well trained am I to do that? I don't know. I kind of learn as I go. We do have workshops. We have in-class support teachers. But, it gets to the point where there are so many different types of kids now than I'm not always sure how I'm supposed to reach everybody at the same time.

The high school math teacher joked about not thinking globally and staying in her own little world, but then expressed concerns that she had about education including: the impact of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), local funding issues that caused some classes to be cancelled, and the poor work ethic of some younger teachers.

A high school language arts teacher answered the question on a local level and explained that she felt the school district did a good job of educating the college bound

student but there was a need to do more for those students who would not be attending college.

The middle school language arts teacher related his concerns about NCLB and the need to spend more money on urban schools. The first grade teacher referred to her agreement with professional journal articles that stressed the need for more independent learning on the part of students in order to prepare them for the years of education ahead of them and the workforce they will be entering.

Another high school language arts teacher answered, "It's a bureaucracy. That's not necessarily bad nor good. Bureaucracy, in and of itself, is simply a structure. And it has to be there because we are dealing with federal standards, state standards and local standards. I believe there is so much good intention out there, but there's really, in many cases, problems in the implementation."

Teacher Eight then went on to express his strong views about tenure stating:

> ... in what other industry, what other profession, can anybody become the boss with a simple buying some votes at the 400 Club with a couple of drinks like the Board of Education can? So, when people criticize tenure, my question is, tell me about your bosses. Are they experts in their field? ... Yeah, well mine is a soccer coach. Mine's the soccer mom whose son didn't get on the varsity team and is now out for murder. Oh yeah, all of a sudden you put it in that perspective. And is that the way corporate America works? No, it's a different entity.

This same teacher ended his response by noting that he saw a desire for change within the educational system expressing concern for the inequities in the educational

system specifically mentioning the plight of some local urban districts and the wealth in the district in which he was employed.

The fourth grade teacher was pleased with the local school system stating, "We're an excellent system. It's very rigorous. There are high expectations set for the teachers, and internally, we set them for the students. So, I think in our district, it's a great place to be, and it's a great place to be a student." But in the end, she did express concern for American students lagging behind other countries in math and science.

The third grade teacher concurred with those who believed that the local school system in her district was doing a fine job. She expressed conflicting views about NCLB and testing saying, "Do I believe in all the testing? I think we spend an inordinate amount of time assessing and you start asking yourself in the class, 'What am I teaching'" as she questioned if she was teaching to the test, she added, "...if it's testing (whether) they can read and write, we better well be teaching to the test." Her final thoughts were expressed by her concern for the children in urban schools whom she believed were being poorly educated.

The ten exemplary mentor teachers demonstrate confidence in understanding how students learn. They speak of the social and emotional growth of children. They are reflective about students, lesson objectives, subject content and instructional practices. Three of the ten teachers specifically referred to NCLB with concerns about the impact of this federal legislation. As experienced educators they have the ability to look at the larger, more complex issues in education. They possess an understanding of the culture and community in which they work and recognize the unique attributes of that population of student. All were satisfied in their current positions and believed their school district

to be a successful one. Three teachers spoke of the concern for educational opportunities for children in urban school districts. These experienced teachers serve as mentors and teacher leaders in their respective schools. None of the teachers expressed an interest in leaving the classroom to take on an administrative role. They are mature in their observations about issues that concern them but their overall responses reflect a positive attitude about students and their own abilities to bring out the best in children.

Summary

This chapter began with a re-statement of the purpose and nature of the study. An explanation of the manner in which these teachers were nominated for inclusion in the study was explained. The characteristics of the subjects were presented to reveal the age, gender, years of experience, teaching assignment and number of mentors of these experienced teachers. These data were gathered through a qualitative method of field research, which consisted of individual, structured interviews with a sample of ten exemplary mentor teachers. The words of the teachers were used extensively to capture the essence of their experiences and perceptions. Patton (2002) views the phenomenological project as an effort to identify and describe the subjective experience of the respondents. Further, Patton encourages the researcher to communicate findings in a creative and meaningful manner.

The structured interview responses were organized in five categories and are represented graphically in Table 3 as: a) attitude and character, b) communication skills, c) students and the desire to continue teaching, d) the role of the mentor and e) beliefs about educational system. The five categories corresponded with the five research questions.

Chapter V reviews these findings and examines them for congruency with the literature. It determines and discusses conclusions and identifies implications for further research.

Table 3

Data Findings

Attitude and Character	Communication Skills	Qualit Students and th Desire to Contin Teaching
Continua learners Commitment Passion Teaching as a vocation "Ah-hah" moments Affirmation from administrators Colleagues	Listening Understanding Value differences Adult learners Relationships	Energy & excitement "Ah-hah" moments Growth in students Renewal

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter I provides the reader with the rationale for this study. Educators increasingly face the pressures of accountability and respond with efforts to staff schools with effective teachers skilled at fostering outstanding academic achievement. The purpose of this study is to identify the attributes of educators who fit this bill – master teachers and exemplary mentors. The subjects of this study are teachers who were selected randomly from a pool of exemplary mentor teachers nominated by their respective administrators in one suburban school district in New Jersey. The research was conducted with the assumption that competent administrators could identify those teachers on their staff who are significantly *a cut above the rest*. Administrators did, in fact, nominate teachers whose character traits and beliefs were consistent with the literature on quality teachers and mentors.

Chapter II contains a review of the relevant literature including the following areas: improving the quality of education, teacher turnover, concepts of mentoring, roles of the mentor, selection of mentors, mentor training, adult learning theory, attrition, needs for studies on mentoring, and the benefits of mentoring to a veteran teacher.

Chapter III describes the design of the study, and the qualitative research method employed for the study. It also described the research sample and the interview questions. This study began with the assumption that the subjects selected were in fact exemplary mentor teachers as nominated by the administrators who worked closely with

teachers and that these administrators would identify these teachers in an honest, fair and accurate manner. A list of exemplary traits identified by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (1999), guided the administrators in their selection as they were asked to examine four skill areas: (1) attitude and character, (2) professional competence and experience, (3) communication skills, and (4) interpersonal skills.

An additional assumption in conducting the interviews was that those exemplary mentor teachers are perceptive of their own personal behaviors and would self-reflect honestly and candidly. Supported by researchers Williams (2003), McEwan (2001) and Stronge (2002), the final assumption was that the traits of exemplary mentor teachers could be categorized and described.

Chapter IV presented the findings and an analysis of the research subjects' responses to the structured interviews. These findings, analysis, and observations were sorted and described in five categories: (1) attitude and character, (2) communication skills, (3) students and the desire to continue teaching, (4) the role of the mentor, and (5) beliefs about the educational system.

Chapter V represents the conclusions based on the qualitative analysis of the interview data in an effort to report the common traits associated with exemplary mentor teachers. These conclusions are based on in-depth interviews with ten very different exemplary teachers who have been in the classroom for ten years or more. This chapter also provides recommendations for future study and implications for practice. The main research question and the four subsidiary questions will frame the discussion and analysis in Chapter V. Quantitative studies supply us with details regarding the number of teachers needed, the number of teachers entering the profession, the number of teachers

leaving, the number of teachers mentored, etc. The qualitative nature of this study adds to that literature with insights about relationships in the school setting, insights about the phenomenon of mentoring, and the beliefs and nature of the individuals participating in the mentoring process (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).

Conclusions

Research Question #1

What are the attributes of exemplary mentor teachers?

Exemplary mentor teachers love their jobs. They are happy, positive people who are motivated by their love for their students confirming Tucker & Strong's (2005) studies that found effective teachers to have a passion for the subjects they teach and genuinely care for their students. Rowley (1999) makes similar observations in his studies that find good mentors communicate hope and optimism. The responses to this research question affirm the findings of Cranwell-Ward, Bossons and Gover (2004) that a mentor is an individual who cares, is warm, and wants to help. Seven of the ten teachers in this study identified students as the most important factor in what keeps them in the classroom. They are people who want to help their students to learn, particularly those students who have struggled in the past. They report their desire to see children learn and have fun and are cognizant of the fact that they, as teachers, are a big part of a student's attitude and success in school. Exemplary teachers want their students to like school and have fun, but they also have high expectations of their students. Each of these teachers is exactly where he or she wants to be right now; as one teacher stated, "I have never considered leaving the classroom". These teachers are proud of the profession that

they've chosen; for as one teacher expressed, "...it's a way to impact the next generation, to have significance". They acknowledge that some teachers may get "burned out" if they do not have a "passion" for teaching and learning. Rowley (1999) puts forth that the good mentor is committed to the role of mentoring. The subjects of this study are committed to their profession, their students and their proteges. Using focus groups for identifying potential mentors, Cranwell-Ward, et.al (2004) point out indicators of the basic skills and qualities deemed necessary in a mentor. According to their research a mentor is someone who, like those in this study, has well-developed interpersonal skills, an ability to relate well with people who want to learn and an open mind, flexible attitudes and recognition of their own need for support.

The good mentor is a model of a continuous learner (Rowley, 1999). The teachers in this study refer to themselves as "lifelong learners" and report that as "who they are" and as "what one needs" to be an exemplary teacher. Most of the teachers addressed the importance of being organized and expressed confidence in their own organizational skills. Teachers at the elementary, middle and secondary level speak about the importance of understanding and accepting the different skills and qualities of their students. They care about their students as individuals and collectively as they acknowledge the importance of educating the next generation of students and teachers. This attitude is consistent with Mullen (2005) who writes that mentors make a commitment to their role and act as a "change force" in education. The mentors in this study are aware of the importance of their roles.

Whittaker (2000), in her study of novice teachers, found that the personal characteristics of the mentor were more important to the novice than their general

professional knowledge. Optimism, passion for teaching and learning, and love for their students are the personal characteristics of the mentors in this study

Research Question #2

What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about effective instruction?

The researcher was surprised at the responses to the question posed to the subjects about the key elements of effective instruction. The literature on effective instruction is typically rather technical in nature. Teachers are most likely to participate in professional development activities focused toward areas that reformers emphasize such as: implementing state or district curriculum and performance standards, integrating technology into the grade or subject taught, using student performance assessment techniques (National Council for Educational Statistics, 1999). The teachers in this study answered the question in terms of understanding the students as learners, knowing their developmental level and understanding the diversity of students' learning styles. A total of five teachers (one of the five elementary teachers, two of the three high school teachers and both middle school teachers) indicated that effective instruction required that teachers have a good understanding of subject content. Half of the teachers made reference to terms integral to the elements of effective instruction such as: teach to the objective, check for understanding, and monitor and adjust. These are sometimes referred to as the Madeline Hunter model after the late Dr. Madeleine Hunter, an educator who wrote about direct instruction methods.

Scherer (1999) writes of two broad categories of support for beginning teachers: (1) instruction related support that includes aiding the novice teacher with knowledge,

skills, and strategies for successful practice and (2) psychological support intended to develop the novice teachers' self-confidence and provide emotional support. The teachers in this study placed greater emphasis on the second category that Scherer emphasizes and points out that it should not be neglected.

The answers to the questions of effective instruction can be summarized as student-centered rather than content centered. The teachers in this study primarily answered the question in terms of understanding the students as learners, knowing their developmental levels, and diversity of learning styles. They spoke of getting students actively engaged in the learning process, being prepared, expecting the unexpected, thinking on your feet, flexibility and the willingness to take risks and be innovative. Many of the respondents addressed reflective practices in teaching and the importance of evaluating lessons for clarity and effectiveness. Evidence of the practice of differentiating instruction was seen as a first grade teacher and a fourth grade teacher spoke of the importance of listening to student input, self-selection and choice. Their pedagogy includes the need to have a balance of teacher directed and student directed activities and being sure that the students are aware of the lesson's objectives. Reflective practice included reflection in lesson planning as well as assessments to confirm achievement of the goals set in the objectives. Jonson (2002) writes of the importance of reflection in providing the teacher with an opportunity to look back and examine student behavior, classroom logistics, and information from parents or information from administrators. Reflection, she writes, becomes the "stepping stones" to improvement and provides the novice with opportunities for growth. She further advises that novice teachers need specific training in reflecting.

Research Question #3

What are the mentor teachers' beliefs and expectations of students?

The subjects of this study expressed a strong sense of joy and fulfillment in their chosen professions as related to how students nurture their desire to continue teaching. They are motivated by the realization that they make a difference in the lives of many children throughout their careers. Watching a student grow emotionally as well as intellectually provides the energy and excitement that they find in their field. These teachers were also asked what they got from administrators and colleagues that motivated their desire to continue teaching, but those responses paled in intensity compared to the responses related to students. The teachers were anxious to share their feelings about helping students to grow in independence and self-confidence as the reason that they went into teaching in the first place. The teachers in this study spoke of the thrill they experience in the moment when a student "gets it" much the same as what Scherer (1999) refers to as the glow of that "light of understanding" when a student finally grasps a concept. They spoke of the rewards of teaching in terms of the excitement of instilling a love of learning. The high school teachers who have the opportunity to teach the same students in several courses remarked on the pleasure they derive from seeing their students grow over the course of time from freshman year to senior year. These teachers appear to thrive on their relationships with their students more than their relationships with colleagues and administrators in the workplace. The teachers were in strong agreement (seven out of ten teachers) about the importance of affirmation from school administrators in nurturing their desire to continue teaching. Administrative support was

evident in their responses. A teacher who has taught in three schools in this district related that all of her administrators had given her positive feedback. The one negative statement about administrators was from a veteran teacher of 22 years who remarked that the teachers sometimes feel that administrators treat them like children. This did not seem to affect her other responses, which were upbeat and positive, indicating to this researcher that administrative feedback was not terribly important to her.

Scherer (1999) in writing about teachers points out that the number one reason that most teachers enter the profession is to make a difference in the lives of students and they remain in the classroom because of the difference that students make in their lives. That is confirmed in the responses of the teachers in this study.

When the subjects were asked about what they received from colleagues that nurtured their desire to continue teaching, two teachers replied that they enjoyed the opportunity to share experiences about students with their colleagues. These teachers enjoyed sharing ideas and the intellectual stimulation they derived from relationships with colleagues. The answers revealed more about the importance of the teachers' commitment to their students.

Research Question #4

What are the mentor teachers' beliefs about how best to mentor novice teachers and what they need to know in order to succeed?

Exemplary mentor teachers' responses to questions about the attributes of the effective mentor can be grouped into three categories: (1) supportive, (2) good communicator and (3) trusting. They believe that in their support role, they need to "be there" for the novice teacher, share their experiences, and show understanding of the

difficulties of being a first year teacher. The school district in the study primarily serves advantaged families. Darling-Hammond & Sykes (2003) write that parents in such schools will not tolerate mediocrity in teaching and are more likely to exert pressure on novice teachers. This validates the need for the novice teacher to receive additional support from an experienced teacher who is a veteran of the school community. Four teachers responded that the mentor must convey to the novice that they "want the novice to succeed". Teachers are more likely to stay in a school where they feel they can succeed. In this regard, research stresses the importance of professional support to build stronger relationships that promote trust, motivation, commitment and reflective practice (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003; Moir, 2003; Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Mentors believe that supporting novice teachers means encouraging the novice to develop his or her own style, to have an open door policy, and to remember and share one's own experiences as a first year teacher. The beliefs of the mentors in this study are congruent with the report of Darling-Hammond & Sykes (2003) on a national teacher supply policy. In their report, they call upon the American education system to create conditions for better support of new teachers from experienced teachers.

Six of the teachers used the word "communicator" specifically. Exemplary mentors speak of the importance of listening to their protege and asking open-ended questions to promote reflective practice in novices. Four subjects told of the importance of advising novices about good communication with parents to be successful. Just as theses teachers reported the importance of understanding and listening when it came to their students, they also reported the importance of understanding and listening when it came to their protégés.

Trust was the third attribute of the effective mentor. Teachers spoke of the importance of building a relationship with the novice teacher, being non-judgmental, and maintaining the confidentiality of the novice at all times. The relationships are described as open, trusting, caring and honest. Five of the teachers talked about observing in their mentee's classroom and having the novice teacher observe the mentor. The relationship is key here as both teachers allow their work to be scrutinized by a colleague when inviting them in to observe. The notion of building a safe and supportive relationship can accelerate the progress of the novice teacher (Lipton & Wellman, 2003).

Only one teacher felt it important to point out that not everyone can be an effective mentor and went on to say that one can be a good teacher and a poor mentor. This observation by the mentor is reflected in Fawcett's 1997 journal article that posed the question, "Is a good teacher always a good mentor?" It is assumed that those exemplary teachers who were not perceived to be good mentors were screened out of this study when not nominated by their principal or supervisor.

Exemplary mentor teachers report using a variety of strategies when mentoring a new teacher including sharing ideas and materials, giving the novice feedback about observations and encouraging them to be self-reflective. When asked what novice teachers need in order to succeed, "good planning" and "flexibility" were named most often. Three felt it important to add "patience"; as one subject articulated, "it takes time" to be a good teacher. True to their responses about why they teach, three teachers reported that novice teachers must have a desire to make a difference.

The benefits of mentoring for veteran teachers were evident many times in the study and is a phenomenon supported by researchers (Lipton & Wellman, 2003;

Denmark & Podsen, 2000; Sweeney, 1994) who addressed the reciprocal learning that takes place when veteran teachers analyze their instructional strategies and synthesize them into meaningful coaching that is shared with the novice teacher. The subjects report a sense of renewal in working with new teachers with fresh ideas. They find that talking to and working with novice teachers provides an opportunity for them to learn new methods that the novice has learned in his or her recent educational studies. One high school teacher used as an example her experience with a novice teacher helping her prepare a PowerPoint presentation. Veteran teachers enjoy the opportunity that mentoring gives them to work with enthusiastic new teachers who enjoy discussing pedagogy. One high school teacher had mentored two alternate route teachers who entered teaching after working for a number of years in the corporate world. He found their "outsider perspective" interesting and felt it kept him grounded because "not all of my students are going to be English majors". He went on to explain that the alternate route novice teachers know what students need when they go out into the business world. All ten subjects remarked on the enthusiasm of the novice teacher and the positive influence that that had on the mentor.

Whitaker (2000) found that novice teachers value good communication skills, trustworthiness, sensitivity, availability, and enthusiasm in their mentors. The mentor teachers in this study embody those valued traits. The support that they provide their proteges is more emotional than technical. This concurs with Whitaker who, in surveying 200 beginning teachers, found that what they most desired from their mentors was emotional support.

Research Question #5

What are your beliefs about the educational system?

This final research question was asked to learn more about the mentor teachers' knowledge of and beliefs about education as a system beyond their individual classrooms. Initially, most of the teachers appeared hesitant in answering and took time to formulate their responses. As a group, they agreed that the affluent suburban school district in which they worked was most successful in educating its students. Most however, expressed deep concern for the plight of students in poor, urban school districts who do not have the same advantages at school or at home. As individuals, their responses were as varied as their respective teaching positions: a kindergarten teacher's concern for society rushing children through their childhood, a high school math teacher's concern about meeting the needs of a growing population of special education students, a high school English teacher's fear that the school wasn't serving the needs of students who were not college bound, another high school teacher's support of teacher tenure. NCLB was named by three of the teachers as an area of concern with little elaboration.

Summary of Key Findings

Certain similarities and themes emerged from the data. The following discussion will address the qualities found in the research subjects.

Attitude and Character

The teachers in this study had a strong willingness to be a role model for other teachers. They exhibit strong commitment to the teaching profession. They describe what they do as their "passion for teaching" and it is evident to those who collaborate and

supervise them. They view their positions with respect and consider teaching a vocation. It is their love for their students and for their profession that keeps them in the classroom. They are continual, lifelong learners. Commitment to their students drives them to find exciting new ways to motivate and engage their students. Their relationship with children is something that they value and upon which they thrive. Teaching and working with young people keeps them young at heart. Energized by those "ah-hah" moments they cherish their investment in the next generation.

These teachers are reflective and learn well from their mistakes. They remember how overwhelmed they were in their early years in the classroom and those who helped them find their way. Sharing experiences and information with colleagues is how they learn, how they decompress and how they gain insight into their students. Being the only adult in a classroom of children can be very isolating. Affirmation from administrators helps them to know that someone appreciates and acknowledges their efforts. Collegiality enhances the positive experience of these teachers.

Communication Skills

The teachers in this study spoke of the importance of listening in response to several of the questions about effective instruction, mentoring and communicating with students and parents. Understanding their students as individuals is integral to their assuming their role as teacher and mentor. They value their students' differences as well as the difference that novice teachers bring to the relationship. The questions that they ask are designed to prompt reflection and understanding.

As mentors they are insightful to the needs of the adult learner. They are aware of the sensitive nature of critiquing another adult. Their desire to help enables them to

overcome their discomfort in this role. They seek to offer advice in positive productive ways.

As teachers and as mentors they convey enthusiasm and a passion for teaching and learning. Exemplary mentor teachers value relationships and are proactive in establishing trusting relationships that assure one of their ability to be discreet and maintain confidentiality.

Professional Competence and Experience

Studies have shown the importance of excellent classroom management skills and these teachers affirm this belief. This was evident in the painstaking preparation of their procedures for classroom routines and a key element in their advice for novice teachers. The effective mentors have confidence in their own abilities and relate how time and experience has made them better teachers.

Understanding the school, the district and the expectation of parents in the community is another area of expertise that these teachers bring to the novice teacher. Most spoke well of the school and district administration and understand the expectations of supervisors.

Exemplary mentor teachers are not threatened by the fresh ideas of their proteges. They report their enjoyment in learning new concepts and strategies from their novices who were trained more recently.

Interpersonal Skills

The teachers in this study have outstanding interpersonal skills. They enjoyed being interviewed, needing little prompting to express themselves, their feelings, their worries, their success and their plans for the new school year. They loved talking about

their craft and a few even acknowledged that they worried that they were getting too verbose in their replies.

Patience is a trait that they reported as critical in their role as teacher and as mentor. They were found to place a great deal of care in maintaining a trusting professional relationship with their mentees and an awareness of the emotional and professional needs of new teachers.

Sensitivity and awareness of issues with students, parents and administrators was evident in all of these seasoned veterans. They demonstrated willingness in sharing this with their mentees. The teachers in this study enjoy the collaborative nature of teaching and mentoring. They are approachable and easily establish a rapport with others.

Trait Theory

In examining the exemplary mentor teacher, common personality traits emerged and are an outcome of this study. Trait theory is defined as the view that differences in personality are best categorized in terms of underlying, possibly innate, attributes (traits) that predispose one toward patterns of thinking and behavior that are essentially consistent over time and across situations (Gleitman, Fridlund & Reisberg, 1999). The teachers in this study have similar personality traits that determine their behavior. According to this theory, the positive teacher is likely to be positive in any situation because of the traits in his personality. Trait theory explains people's behavior in terms of fixed characteristics (Mischel, 1999). Therefore, the characteristics of the teachers described in this chapter explain their behavior as exemplary teachers and mentors. Optimally, administrators who have the task of selecting mentors for novice teachers

would do well to select teachers who posses the traits of an exemplary mentor teacher described in this and other studies about effective mentor teachers.

Teaching as Theater

The veteran teachers in this study are a happy, positive crew, cast in the performance called school. They cherish the sense of renewal in the cycle of teaching. Each September is like January, a new year, an opportunity to do it again, to do it better, to present the learning differently, to work with new children. This study took place at just that time, August and early September just as the teachers were putting the finishing touches on their debuts in the new school year, with a new supporting cast and a new audience. They assumed the roles of a theater crew. Props were in place; the stage was set. Scripts were studied and polished. The new audience would be impressed with new material and programs were printed to serve as a guide to the performance. They know that the critiques are out there and they strive for positive reviews.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study is not to find ways to help veteran teachers become exemplary teachers; the goal is to identify the qualities of exemplary mentor teachers so that they can be utilized as mentors for the next generation of teachers. Exemplary teachers come to the educational setting with a profile of traits and skills that promote success in the classroom and generate a sense of hope and optimism that transcends from their interactions with their students to their interactions with their proteges.

Veteran teachers need to be scrutinized for exemplary practices, identified and utilized by school districts as mentors to novice teachers. Providing novice teachers with exemplary mentor teachers is a way of retaining new teachers. Darling-Hammond &

Sykes (2003) advise that in the years ahead, the chief problem will not be producing new teachers, but in preventing the exodus of new teachers from the profession. The problem of "churning" (Ingersoll, 2003) which results in a constant influx of inexperienced teachers is caused largely by insufficient support of new teachers in the first three years.

The accountability and standards movement associated with NCLB would suggest that our educational woes could be solved by reforms that would increase standardized testing and take a hard-line approach with teachers and schools that fail to meet the expected criteria. Policymakers who support this movement measure educational success using only the quantitative data of an assessment instrument that is expected to accurately measure the academic achievement of every child. All of this has turned the attention away from the real work of the teacher (Williams, 2001).

Induction programs will be most useful to novice teachers in guiding them through standards, curriculum and assessments. It is the unique trait of the individual mentor characterized as emotional support that will matter most to novice teachers and sustain them in the critical first three years of teaching. The teachers in this study made no apologies for not rattling off a long list of educational jargon to express who they were, what their beliefs were and how they mentor novice teachers. It is their passion for teaching, love for students, respect for their profession and commitment to helping others that the novice teacher will take away from their experience. The mentoring experience is about the relationship between novice and mentor. The mentors in this study are teachers of students rather than teachers of math or English. This study found more about who should mentor than what skills are taught by a mentor.

As school districts build induction programs for new teachers, careful attention should be paid to the quality of the mentor. Exemplary mentor teachers love their students and the act of teaching to share knowledge. They are life-long learners who are dedicated to their role as a mentor recognizing the importance of caring, trust and patience. They convey to their proteges the importance of understanding the unique developmental needs of their students. Exemplary mentors are reflective practitioners and encourage that in their novices. They are flexible and appreciate the uniqueness of the individual novice teacher as they encourage the beginning teacher to develop a style of teaching that best suits them. Their devotion to their students and their proteges is not based entirely on selfless giving or the need to feed a hungry ego. Veteran, exemplary teachers are sustained and nurtured by the synergy of their relationship with the learning community and the satisfaction of knowing that they are a significant influence in the lives of their students. Working with novices is their way of giving back and the rewards of that role are intrinsic in nature.

The research reveals much about the attitudes and character of effective mentors. Ingersoll (2003), Darling-Hammond & Sykes (2003) and others advise us that there is no teacher shortage, but rather the problem of the leaky bucket. Teachers are entering the field in sufficient number, but fail to remain in the profession. Schools need a force of novice teachers who will stay in the classroom to replenish the ranks as veteran teachers retire. McEwan (2002), Wong (2002), Udelhofen & Larson (2003), Moir (2003), Lipton and Wellman (2003), Cranwell-Ward, et.al (2004) have identified the traits of highly effective mentors and this researcher found these traits in the subjects interviewed for this

study. This study reveals an understanding of the self-renewing aspects of exemplary mentor teachers and confirms Williams' (2001) study in:

> ...understanding the passion of teachers who have managed to maintain their enthusiasm and commitment to teaching in an era of disillusionment about education and a time when quantitative measures are dictating the important work of teachers in individual classrooms (p.76).

Like Williams, this study evolved from the researcher's own love of teaching and learning, and for a desire to instill a sense of hope and enthusiasm in the next generation of teachers. Successful teachers possess a deep sense of moral purpose. Fullan (2001) writes of the importance of moral purpose defining it as "acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers, and society as a whole (p. 3). High quality, effective mentor teachers have a great sense of moral purpose in terms of their commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of their students, mentees, community and to their profession. Their moral purpose is evident in their willingness to accept the professional responsibility of mentoring novice teachers. They demonstrate unwavering commitment to excellence and service. About relationships, Fullan (2002) tells us that in business you can't get anywhere without them. This holds true for education as well. Exemplary teachers understand the importance of establishing trusting relationships with their students, parents, colleagues and their mentees. Some may say that teaching is about control, but the great teacher takes pride in relinquishing responsibility for learning to the student and basking in the sense of accomplishment that comes with carefully crafting that release of control. It is not only important to study the traits of exemplary teachers, but just as important for schools to spread the word in public

forums that each and every day in schools with great teachers children are learning and thriving. It is time to re-establish public trust in schools. Studying the traits of exemplary teachers, encouraging them to assume leadership roles in education and supporting the efforts of new teachers is a key element in improving schools and attracting the best and the brightest to the teaching profession

Implications for Further Research

At the conclusion of the data collection process, additional research components became evident. Future researchers might wish to expand on this study.

1. This study represents the teachers' own perceptions of their personal traits and the qualities that they posses as teachers and mentors. The traits of exemplary teachers and the beliefs that they carry with them impact their daily instruction and their practices in mentoring novice teachers. The administrators in the study were contacted by letter and asked to nominate exemplary mentor teachers with a list of exemplary mentor traits provided for them. Surveys and personal interviews with administrators would add more validity to the conclusions about the qualities of exemplary mentor teachers. Such would provide an opportunity for respondent administrators to further elaborate on the critical skills and attributes that they observe in working with these teachers.
2. Collecting data about the mentors through a focus group of novice teachers would provide additional information in determining the characteristics and traits most valued by the novice teachers. Such a focus group would seek to determine if the self reported activities of the mentors are in agreement with the assistance that is reported by the novice teacher.

3. The scope of this study was limited to one affluent suburban school district. National studies find that the shortfall in providing every child in America with quality teaching is particularly severe in low-income communities and rural areas. (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2003). Inexperienced and under-prepared teachers are concentrated in these schools. Future researchers may wish to replicate the study in urban and rural school districts.
4. Each school district has its own unique induction or mentoring program. These programs vary in length from one to three years and differ in the required training and activities of both mentor and mentee. A study of the induction programs that train the mentors and the novice teachers would shed additional light on the influence of the mentor.
5. The sample size (n=l 0) of this study is a limitation of the study. A study in several comparable schools would yield a larger sample size and could produce different results.
6. Further research in the area of the elements of formal induction programs would yield additional information about how best to train new teachers.
7. Future researchers might be most interested in examining academic performance indicators of students with experienced teachers and students with inexperienced teachers.

Concluding Remarks

Caring, positive educators have a profound influence on millions of students in schools across the country. Almost everyone has had a special teacher at some point–

one who saw potential where others did not, one who made ideas come alive, one who taught more than what was in the textbook. School administrators are charged with finding those exemplary mentor teachers, those men and women who can step up to the task of mentoring. Tapping these individuals to serve as mentors to the next generation of teachers is an important step in putting a quality teacher in every classroom. The research on teacher turnover reveals a problem with attrition and not a problem recruiting new teachers to the profession. High rates of teacher turnover and attrition directly and negatively effect student achievement.

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Appendix A

Letter of Solicitation/Reply Form – Administrators

July 24, 2005

Dear

My name is Eileen Cambria. I am a doctoral student in the department of Education, Leadership and Management Policy at Seton Hall University.

The topic of my research is the behavioral characteristics and beliefs of experienced teachers who mentor novice teachers. The title of the study is "The Qualities of Effective Mentor Teachers". The superintendent of schools has granted me permission to conduct this study.

I need your help in finding those exemplary mentor teachers, those dedicated professionals who are "beyond good". You will be asked to identify one or more exemplary teacher mentors. To aide you in your selection please consider the following criteria:

The exemplary teacher should:

- Currently teach in the school district
- Have 10 or more years of experience as a teacher here or elsewhere
- Have served as a formal or informal mentor to a novice teacher

To further enhance your ability to make this identification I invite you to refer to the qualities of effective mentors in four skill areas described by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (Fall 1999).

1.Attitude and Character: Teachers who:

- Have the desire to be a role model for other teachers
- Exhibit strong commitment to the teaching profession
- Believe mentoring improves instructional practice
- Demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning
- Is reflective and able to learn from mistakes

2. Professional Competence and Experience: Teachers who:

- Are regarded by colleagues as outstanding teachers
- Posses excellent knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter
- Demonstrate excellent classroom management skills
- Feels comfortable being observed by other teachers
- Understands the policies and procedures of the school and district

3.Communication Skills: Teachers who:

- Articulate effective instructional strategies
- Listen attentively
- Ask questions that prompt reflection and understanding
- Offer critiques in positive and productive ways
- Convey enthusiasm and passion for teaching

4.Interpersonal Skills: Teachers who:

- Maintain trusting professional relationships
- Have the ability to care for a protege's emotional and professional needs
- Are attentive to sensitive political issues
- Are approachable and demonstrate good rapport with others
- Are patient

It is my belief that principals and supervisors are in a good position to identify the most outstanding teacher mentors in schools because it is you who have the experience and responsibility for supervising and evaluating teachers.

Please nominate as many teachers as you feel match these descriptors. Once identified by you, I will contact these individuals to request two sixty minute interviews. The teacher interviews will help me to gather data about the attributes of exemplary mentors, their beliefs about effective instruction, their expectations for students, and their beliefs about mentoring. To maintain the integrity of this study, please do not discuss this letter with the teacher that you are nominating. The names of the participating teachers will not be reported to you.

Participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time. All participants in this study will receive a copy of the abstract upon request.

The confidentiality and anonymity of all interviews, individuals, schools and district will be preserved. This information will be used solely for the purpose of analysis.

All notes and tape recordings will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study. Prior to that, all notes and recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home.

It is my hope that this study will enhance our understanding of the qualities, proficiencies and beliefs held by exemplary mentor teachers. Whether or not you decide to participate in this study, I would appreciate it if you would complete and return the enclosed reply form so that I will know whom to contact for interview purposes. Thank you for taking time to help with this project.

Sincerely,

Eileen M. Cambria, Assistant Principal
Liberty Corner School
61 Church Street
Liberty Corner, NJ 07938
(908) 204-2550 ext. 191

PRINCIPAL/SUPERVISOR REPLY FORM

____ I do volunteer to involve my school in the research described on the preceding page. I have read the material on the preceding page. I have identified the following teachers as "exemplary mentor teachers":

_____ I do not elect to involve my school in this study.

Signature of Participant _

Date: _____

Please return in the enclosed stamped envelope to:

Eileen M. Cambria
Assistant Principal
Liberty Corner School
61 Church Street
Liberty Corner, NJ 07938

Appendix B

Letter of Solicitation/Reply Form–Teachers

August 18, 2005

Dear Teacher:

My name is Eileen Cambria. I am completing a doctoral dissertation in Educational Administration at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services.

The topic of my research is the behavioral characteristics and beliefs of experienced teachers who mentor novice teachers. The title of the study is "The Qualities of Effective Mentor Teachers". The superintendent of schools has granted me permission to conduct this study.

I need your help in collecting data about the qualities of the effective mentor. You have been identified by your principal, [redacted], as an exemplary mentor teacher, one of those dedicated professionals who are "beyond good". Should you agree to participate in this study, I would seek to make an appointment with you to conduct two one on one interviews. The interviews will help me to gather data about the attributes of exemplary mentors, beliefs about effective instruction, expectations for students, and beliefs about mentoring. The length of each interview is approximately sixty minutes.

Participation is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time. All participants in this study will receive a copy of the abstract upon request.

The confidentiality and anonymity of all interviews, individuals, schools and district will be preserved. Names of participants will be replaced by numbers assigned by the researcher. The list matching names with numbers will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. Your agreement to participate or not participate in this study will not be divulged to anyone. This information will be used solely for the purpose of analysis.

All notes and audiotapes will be destroyed three years after the conclusion of the study. Prior to that, all notes and recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home.

It is my hope that this study will enhance our understanding of the qualities, proficiencies and beliefs held by exemplary mentor teachers. Whether or not you decide to participate in this study, I would appreciate it if you would complete and return the enclosed reply form in the self-addressed envelope provided to me at Liberty Corner School so that I will know whom to contact for interview purposes. If you indicate that you are willing to participate in this study, I will contact you to arrange a time and place for our discussion. Thank you for taking time to help with this project.

Sincerely,

Eileen M. Cambria
Assistant Principal
Liberty Corner School
61 Church Street
Liberty Corner, NJ 07938
(908) 204-2550 ext. 191

TEACHER REPLY FORM

The Qualities of Effective Mentor Teachers

Please Check:

_____I agree to participate

_____ I do not wish to participate

Name: _____

School: _____

Best time of day to be contacted: _____

Phone number/s that are best to reach you at:_____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return in the enclosed stamped envelope to:

Eileen M. Cambria
Liberty Corner School
61 Church Street
Liberty Corner, NJ 07938

Appendix C

Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

Researcher's Affiliation

Eileen M. Cambria is completing a doctoral dissertation in Education Administration at Seton Hall University, College of Education and Human Services.

Purpose

The purpose of Eileen M. Cambria's study is to investigate *The Qualities of the Effective Mentor Teacher.* The two interviews with each participating teacher should each take approximately sixty minutes.

Procedures

Subjects will be interviewed by the researcher. The researcher will make notes of the responses as well as tape record the conversation. Interviews will be conducted at the responding participant's school.

Instruments

The interview with each teacher will consist of the researcher asking background questions and approximately twelve open-ended questions in effort to gain my perspective about the topic of effective mentoring. The open-ended questions explore areas of beliefs about effective instruction, expectations of students as well as other areas that may occur to me. An example of a question is: *In your opinion or perception, what do novice teachers need to know about instruction in order to be successful teachers?*

Voluntary Nature

Participation in this study would be voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. Refusal to participate in the study or discontinuing participation at any time will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to the subjects otherwise entitled.

Anonymity

There is no anonymity in this study due to the nature that the researcher is conducting face to face interviews. However, the information gathered through the interviews will be used solely for purposes of analysis and that the confidentiality of the interview and of the school district will be preserved. To maintain accuracy and confidentiality, each subject will be assigned a number code.

Confidentiality

All recorded and documented responses will be kept in a secure, locked cabinet in the researcher's home.

Confidential Records

The researcher and her mentor will see the raw data (all notes and recordings) which will be saved in a secure, locked cabinet in the researcher's home for three years.

Risks and Discomforts

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

Benefits

The expected benefits from participating in this study include a greater understanding of the qualities of an effective mentor teacher and possible policy formulation as a result of knowledge gained.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Alternative Procedures

There no appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment that might be advantageous for the subject as a result of this study.

Contact Information

Eileen M. Cambria, the researcher and a student at Seton Hall University, may be contacted for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research subject's rights. In addition, the researcher's mentor and the Chairperson of Seton Hall University's IRB may also be contacted.

Eileen M. Cambria
Liberty Corner School
61 Church Street, Liberty Corner, NJ 07938
908.654-3173

Dr. Daniel Gutmore, Researcher's Mentor
Seton Hall University
Department of Education, Administration and Supervision
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, New Jersey 07079
973.275.2853

Dr. Mary Ruzicka, Institutional Review Board Chairperson
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Avenue
South Orange, New Jersey 07079
973.275.2723

Audio Tapes

Signing this Informed Consent grants the researcher permission for audio taping. The subject has the right to review all or any portion of the tape and request that it be destroyed. The audio tape will be kept in a secure and locked cabinet in the researcher's home for a period of at least 3 years following termination of the research.

Copy of Informed Consent Form

A copy of the signed and dated Informed Consent will be given to the subject.

Subject or Authorized Representative Date

Appendix D

Background Information–Teachers

Background Information

Age: Please circle
30-34 yrs. 35-39 yrs. 40-44 yrs. 45-49 yrs.
50-54 yrs. 55-59 yrs. 60-64 yrs.

Gender: _____ Total number of years teaching: _____

Degree: _____ University: _____ Yr. Of Grad: _____

Degree: University: Yr. Of Grad:

Degree: _____ University: _____ Yr. Of Grad: _____

In school at present time?: _____ Where?:

Do you read professional literature regularly? Which ones?_____

Do you attend professional workshops regularly? What kinds? __

List each teaching position you have held in your career:

1) Position: Grade(s): _____

Location: Other responsibilities?

2) Position: Grade(s): _____

Location: Other responsibilities?

3) Position: Grade(s): _____

Location: Other responsibilities?

4) Position: Grade(s): _____

Location: Other responsibilities?

How many student teachers have you mentored? _____

How many novice teachers have you mentored? _____